

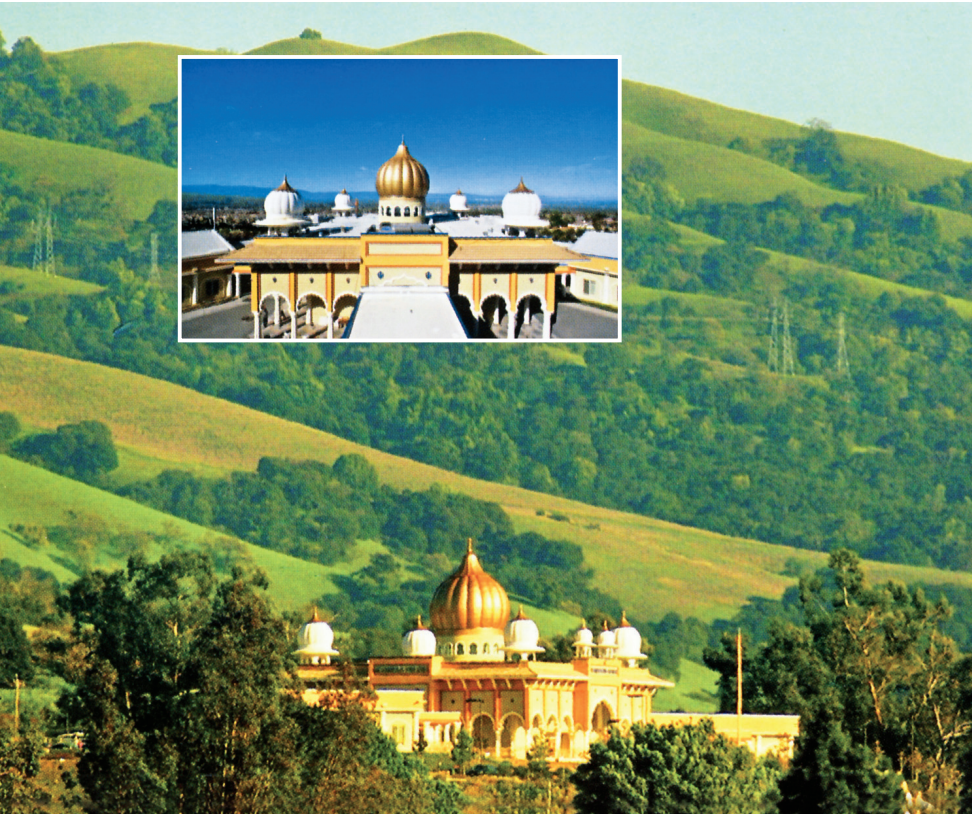
III/2020

NISHAAN

NAGAARA

**The Sikh Thought
Universal Truths**

**To Be a Sikh
Gurdwaras in Africa**



The Eighth Annual Conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib, organised by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation, the San Jose Gurdwara Sahib and SikhNet was held on 7 September 2019 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley.

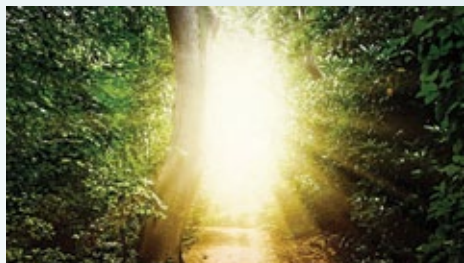


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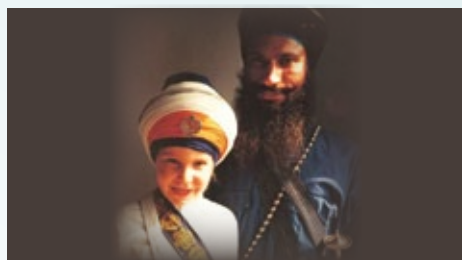
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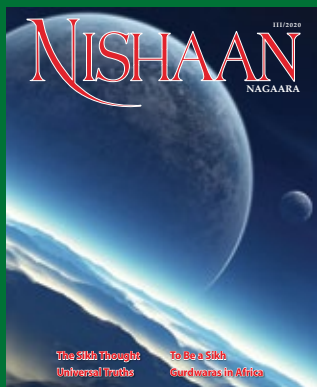
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The Sikh Thought
Universal Truths

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Casting a lovely light



Since I sat down with this editorial in mind, competing alternate titles have flashed their presence and pushed their appeal, even though I am not yet clear about the contents and the direction that I prefer. For instance, *The Last Frontier* sounded just right as the title. Or perhaps *Casting a lovely light*.

Life offers many a closed box to honestly parse some ideas imaginatively and honestly. Life comes with two closed doors one at the beginning of life, the other at its end. *Birth and Death* remain the ultimate temptations of closed doors. Let's begin by briefly celebrating this *Goulash of Life*. We will conclude with an open-ended expression in Punjabi from the Guru Granth: *Eh Sareera Merya....* So here it goes.

We humans have two magical traits that are fundamental to life with death as the *last frontier*. It is the permanent cessation of all biological functions that sustain a living organism that begins to visibly

decompose soon after death. It is an inevitable process eventually occurring in all living organisms. When all else fails, *Wikipedia* comes to mind but I wonder if any statement on death is as meaningful as it appears to be?

I wonder how a complex 'machine' such as the human body rarely, if ever, dies completely and entirely on call when the bell rings. Different parts of the body weaken and deteriorate at different rates. Some organs even retain the ability to regain enough life to move back to the status of living functional entities (*organ donations are an example*). Many a miracle baffles the best of scientists. Yes, it is rare but some healthy people age prematurely and show all the signs and symptoms of old age while still in their teens. Do not also forget not that many people die suddenly and completely: here they were and a moment later, gone forever! *Rude awakenings strew the path*. Also keep

in mind that our simple lives habituate the narrow reaches of a cul-de-sac.

Birth is a pleasure and celebrations come easy. Yet, we always wonder how to talk about death, particularly about, or with, a dying person. Think again! Isn't every living person indeed a dying person as he/she is in the path of dying from the moment he or she is born, or even earlier.

Around death itself, we have to weave fantastic, possibly imaginary, tales because we just do not have any idea of what happens after death. Human societal behaviour needs discipline so that human actions are regulated. Only then can communities grow and flourish. A possible parallel I see is a large school with many students but very few good teachers.

There is no possible way to live forever and there never has been. Early humans realised that, no matter how magical a life may have been, death is inevitably followed by limitations. *Prayers, magical potions, and spells that guarantee life forever remain aplenty - but a myth.*

Yet mankind is full of comfort quotes and bottled magic in defiance of all common sense or evidence of unending life every moment. On this Guru Granth Sahib is blunt and absolutely clear (p.660). The question is: for how long is our sense of the "present tense existence", our awareness of human life?

Hum aadmi haen ik damee(n): Guru Granth Sahib. This is the ultimate measure of time. It clearly tells us that our existence is effectively just *one breath long*, a brief period that is clearly the present. The breath that we are now in is the only present time, the breath we were in before the present breath is already the past, the breath that will follow the one we are in now is the future. The breath we are in is the only present tense and will soon become the past. The past has shaped us and made us what we are. *Value it!* The future is yet unborn. We don't live in the past nor in the future. Our existence is as creatures of one breath.

All this sounds like head games that overly smart clever minds might indulge in but this is a game with no satisfactory end. So, think again, death is the absolute truth as it has always been. Yet we spend life either ruing the past or dreaming slippery slopes of an unpredictable future. Remember also that focus on a life of one breath is the idea which we will revisit shortly.

Abraham Lincoln expressed the strong but similar thought that "It does not matter who my grandfather was; what matters is what his grandson is up to today ... and that becomes a grand measure of a human life"

A profound idea! But did we somehow destroy it when we suggested that by doing materially well in the world, our progeny will enhance our qualities and virtues, their parental ancestral generation? In other words, our children exist to promote us and to glorify our existence when we are already likely dead or on the path of death.

Or that the end of life is followed by a fantastic fictional reality of an afterlife? Is that not the central fundamental feature of most religions of mankind?

It is an irony that two of the most significant events of any life—birth and death—remain critically unforeseen and unpredictable, even in societies that proudly maintain the most advanced of health systems. How then can we absolutely control and manage them precisely during life? Despite material comforts, the availability of the best science and the foremost experts, more often than not life is beset with rude awakenings. A flawless birth is largely joyful, but not always. On the other end death greets us unfailingly: sad but not completely devoid of all joy and comfort. The fond remembrance of a departed person is often recast more positively. In memory, a life often acquires a kinder, more respectful appraisal.

Remember the adage common to all societies and communities that *no one is perfect*. In America a smile lights up at its completion of this pun "No one is perfect except you and I" it is followed by a pause, a wicked smile and then the killer advice... "and about you I am not so sure." So much for the goulash!

Communities derive their power from the quality of interaction between the members. Humans are imaginative animals and they want to unearth and rediscover the meaning of life. Something that gives a permanence - a marker - to a life. Then a loaded question looms like 'What is the purpose of life?'

Now for a little detour to parse this fundamental question. If there is a basic purpose to life that's common to all humanity, then it should be able to stand without necessarily leaning on one or the other religious systems of mankind.

If the purpose is to meet or sit with the Creator at Death, then the sooner one dies, the faster would be that union! Does this not mean the sooner the better? And this seems to dismiss any long-term over-arching purpose to life. Keep in mind though that any life that is lived awhile is better seen cast in a kinder framework.

How do religions evolve? The newly born cannot survive alone for it is absolutely helpless and totally vulnerable. Protective fences are necessary between individuals just as they are necessary between neighbouring homes. Protective boundaries are necessary for both survival and growth and are created by commonality of needs: language, culture, music, cuisine and worldview. Good fences make good neighbours, but they also create boundaries between people - the divisive ideas of "us and them". This is how we construct barriers against others and create walls of strength to keep the others out. Families are essential for survival and are the smallest units of a community.

But when death comes, the Last Rites become important. Here then sentiment is overarching. It is not important how bright, smart, rich or kind was the deceased. The only fact is that someone who shared a life with us, is no more. Where did they go? We really do not know, nor will we.

What happens after death is a continuing mystery. No one knows for sure, which is why we settle for a mixed remembrance of some joy and some tears. But the person has lived a full life and should not get short shrift. Whether he was an Einstein or the village idiot, the final question is what kind of a life was led? What is, after all, the purpose of a life?

Now, pause a moment. Human life began many, many thousands of years back. And we are not going back to the absolute beginnings of life on Earth. Life on Earth today offers many opportunities: travel and communication across the world and technology that did not exist less than a century ago and in the times to come, we can now even leave earth this and land on a different planet. A child born today comes to a society which offers electrifying advantages of the Twentieth Century. For travel he may not depend on a boat or horse and his bare strength. He can now fly to the ends of the earth! Such inventions were



not made by you or me, not earned or created by any one person. This is the work of countless others that we have inherited. Their work has improved life on Mother Earth. This is a debt on our heads. How do we plan to pay for this largesse is the question?

Most organised religions offer a very strict formula for the life hereafter with a complex system of justice, punishment or rewards, even recurring birth in a variety of forms. But, in the final analysis, these remain fantastic compliments to human imagination. The Sikh way of life considers such matters at length but without signing on any particular model or path at the end.

Guru Granth (p. 922) posits the question: *Eh sareera meyrira iss jug meh aaye ke kya tudh karam kamaaya*, literally rendered, the perennial challenge is: "What footprints would you leave in the sands of time at the end of your earthly journey? How will you repay this debt to life?"

The answer as I imbibe from Gurbani has: "If you leave the world a little better, even by an iota, than what you inherited at birth, then you have paid your debt. The purpose of life is not to adopt a formulaic guide to a magical end but to walk the path honestly, with an open mind.

Now at the late evening or near midnight of my life, my thoughts fall on an old poem:

*My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But oh my foes and ah my friends.
It casts a lovely light !*

I see this as the ultimate challenge to a productive life!

IJ Singh

Sirdar Kapur Singh writes on

The Sikh Thought

ਗੁਰਮਤ

ਸਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ

ਗੁਰ ਤੇ

ਮੇਰੀ ਜੀ ਸੁਣ ਹੈ॥

The essentials of Sikh thought are not unusually the same as those of other world religions and, as may be expected, their treatment by Sikhism is, in the main, on the lines of speculative thought. Wherever Sikhism differs or departs from these lines of thought, it does so, as a rule, not by introducing new terms or concepts but by underlining an already familiar concept, or by amplifying or interpreting it otherwise. This is, as it should be, for, thus alone is it possible to effect a new advance of expansion in the cultural and religious horizon of mankind, and it is thus that all great cultures and civilizations have emerged and developed.

The Universe

In Sikh thought, the final duality between the Matter and Spirit is denied. The basic Sikh thought is strictly monistic :

“From One the Many emanate, and finally into the One the Many submerge.”

All that exists, whether in the form of phenomena and appearances, as Becoming, or as Numenon and Reality, as Being, is, in fact, the Spirit and the Mind. The individual mind, the numerous forms of life and the inanimate matter are all Spirit in different forms. Out of its own impulse and initiative of the Spirit



a process of involutions occurred for some limited purpose, the precise nature of which is beyond human comprehension. All we can say is that such is its nature and such its pleasure. The fraction of the universe in its initial form, which the modern theorists, such as Abbe Lamatre call, the Primaeval Atom, resulted from the involutory impulse of the Absolute Spirit, God. In this Primaeval Atom was originally concentrated, in a super-dense state, that which expanded and disintegrated, through an antithetical evolutionary impulse, for thousands of millions of years of the human mind, and finally into the universe as it is today.

This eruptive, fissiary impulse, whereby, the Primaeval Atom has issued into the innumerable forms constituting the universe, has reached its highest point, up-to-date, in the creation of man, and thus man, therefore, is the point in creation from where the inverse movement of evolution may take a further leap towards the Spirit. These two processes of involution and evolution, *apasarpani* and *upasarpani* as the profound ancient Jaina thought speculated, constitute a double but simultaneous movement, and thus creation of the universe is an involution-cum-evolution process, a descent and an ascent. The universe, thus, is nothing but God-in-Becoming. “The Formless has become all the innumerable forms, Himself. He, that is beyond the attributes, inheres. Nanak declares the doctrine of the One Absolute Being, that is Becoming, for, the One indeed is the Many.”

The main doctrines of Sikh theology are grounded in this view of the Ultimate Reality and its nature.

The Genesis

With regard to the coming into being of the Primaeval Atom, the Sikh doctrine is that the process was instantaneous, caused by the Will of God. “The forms become in consequence of the Divine Will. Comprehension fails at this stage of understanding of the Divine Will.”

After thus stating this beginning of the Becoming, the further statements made in the Sikh scripture about the creation and evolution of the universe, are remarkably akin to the picture which has now been adumbrated by scientific speculation after considering the data revealed by the recent advances in

Observational Astronomy and probes into the heart of Matter. One of the basic hymns in the Sikh scripture, which may be called, the Hymn of the Genesis, says :

“For millions upon millions, countless years was spread darkness,
When existed neither earth nor heaven,
But only the limitless Divine Ordinance.
Then existed neither day or night, nor sun or moon;
The Creator into unbroken trance was absorbed.
Existed then neither forms of creation, nor of speech;
Neither wind nor water;
Neither was creation, or disappearance or transmigration.
Then were not continents, nether regions, the seven seas,
Nor rivers with water flowing.
Existed then neither heaven or the mortal world or the nether world.
Neither hell or heaven or time that destroys.”

“As it pleased Him, the world He created;
Without a supporting power the expanse He sustained.”

“None His extent knows.
Of this from the Master, perfectly endowed comes realisation.”

Man's predicament

Paul Tillich identifies man's basic predicament as existential estrangement from his essential being, estrangement which is expressed in anxiety about meaninglessness of life, gnawing awareness of alienation and incurable lack of wholeness, as his existential dilemma : “my bedstead of anxiety, strung strings of pain and my cover quilt of alienation is my existential predicament. O, my God, take note of it and have mercy upon me.”

Paul Tillich, the modern Western man, was not aware that in the Sikh scripture, not only the human predicament has been noted, but the way to its cure has also been pointed out : Let man take refuge in God and proceed to cure his incurable sickness through identifying himself with God's purposes: “How else can man secure abiding peace and wholeness except through refuge in and communion with God ?”



You are the Universe, Expressing itself as a Human for a little while

Man being the highest-yet point in the process of creation, where the evolutionary impulse has apparently near-exhausted its initial momentum, it is man on whom now the responsibility rests for consciously revitalising this impulse for a further evolutionary leap.

“Thou art the very essence of God. Therefore, know thyself as such.”

“You have received this gift of the human body and it is from here that the further upward movement towards God-realisation starts. Therefore, now make an all-out effort to reach the Goal and do not waste human life in frivolities.”

It is the involution-cum-evolution which is responsible for creation of the universe, and which after reaching the point of human consciousness, has reached a stasis, and the man is thus a voluntary diminution of the infinitude of God, for some obscure but limited purpose, as, indeed, all forms of existence, represent a diminution of God. Since God is truth, knowledge, bliss, light, harmony and immortality, the involuted forms of creation are so much less of all these. Being the stage at which the evolution has emerged into self-consciousness, man is capable of knowing that he has reached a particular stage of the

creative process and he is capable, volitionally, of taking steps to evolve upwards to the next stage. This is the stage of the *brahmajnani*, or the God-conscious man, and it is this notion of evolution, the premonition of which finds expression in the later 18th and early 19th century West European literature in the form of the concept of *the Superman*.

“Lo, I preach to you the Superman; Superman is the meaning of the earth,” said Nietzsche. Again, “Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman, what is great in man, is that he is a bridge, and not a goal.”

Sikhism agrees with this except that it declares that “true meaning of the earth” reaches far beyond the stage of the Superman and Superman is only an interim stage “a bridge and not a goal.” Sikhism endorses Nietzsche that the sphere of activity of the Superman, and of the higher-still goal of the evolution, is “the earth”, in the sense that it is on this earth that a perfect human Society of God-conscious men, a psycho-social perfection, is the ultimate objective of the impulse of God, which has originally given rise to the process of creation. In contradistinction to all those and previous philosophies and religions which taught that the ultimate goal of man was either absorption

into God, or entry into a supramundane Kingdom of God, wherein there is abiding propinquity to God, Sikhism urges man to divinise the whole of humanity on this earth by transforming mind, life and matter, through a conscious effort and will, and with the aid of the spiritual technique of the Namyoga, which is capable of taking along the whole psyche of man to a level of existence, undreamed of before, where pure knowledge, limitless harmony and divine bliss would prevail. This indeed would be a Society of God-like-beings, and ultimate purpose of the divine impulse of creation is the establishment of this Society of human deities in terrestrial spheres of the universe. Teachings of the Sikh Gurus are that the supreme duty of man is to make an all-out effort towards this divine goal. Sikh Gurus not only point towards this goal, but also reveal the way towards it. "Hail, the Guru, a hundred thousand times, hail, for He reveals the secret of transforming mankind into deities and that, too, in an instant".

God, the Ultimate Reality

The Sikh concept of the Ultimate Reality is more akin to the Judaic notion of an Almighty Person than to the Aryan concept of an immanent neutral Principle. The basic formula of Sikh dogma is the opening line of the Sikh scripture which characterises the Ultimate Reality as follows :

"The One Becoming-Being Truth. Numenon. Creator. Person. Without fear of Another. Without animosity towards Another. Beyond Time. Form. Unborn. Self-expression. Light. Contacted by human mind through (His) Grace."

Maya, a Relative Truth

The doctrine of *maya* has been basic to the Hindu and Buddhist speculations from the very beginning. The best known work, apart from the omniscient Mahabharata, in which the term *maya* (relative truth) is employed as a philosophical concept, is the metrical treatise, *Karika*, by *Gaudpad*, wherein, unlike the Mahabharata (Bhagwadgita XVIII. 61), the term is not taken for granted, but is explained and defined. Since this name *Gaudpad* was borne by the teacher of the famous philosopher of Hindu monism, Samkara, author of the *Karika* may be the same person who might have lived at end of the 7th



century. This work, *Karika*, is usually printed with the *Mandukya-Upanisad* and for practical purposes, is regarded a part of it.

In language and thought, both, it bears a remarkable resemblance to Buddhist writings of the Madhyamik School and the criticism of Hindu orthodoxy that the monism of Samkara, in which the doctrine of *maya* is embedded, is, in reality, crypto-Buddhism, is not without substance.. In the *Karika*, the world of appearances is compared to the apparent circle of fire produced by a whirling lighted torch. This striking image first occurs in the *Maitrayana Upanisad* (VI. 24). It also occurs in the Buddhist Mahayan scripture, the *Lankavtarsutra*, which purports to be an account of the revelation of the true Religion of Gautama, the Buddha, when he visited Ceylon and there gave discourses to the King of the island, Ravana, and his wife, Mahamati.

This represents a well matured phase of speculation in Buddhism, as it criticises the Hindu schools of philosophy of the Samkhya, Pasupat, as well as other schools. It includes a prophecy about the birth of Nagarjuna, the great Buddhist savant of the 4th century AD and it mentions advent of Guptas the which marks the renaissance of Hinduism in India. It also alludes to the fresh incursions of the Hunas into northern India, which incursions destroyed the Imperial Gupta dynasty at end of the 5th century AD Throughout Hindu speculative and religious literature ever since, this doctrine of *maya* is admitted as in some way an independent principle of the process and ontological structure of creation. True, the subtle Samkara asserts that the principle of *maya* is *aniravacani*, that is, it can neither be said to exist nor not to exist. A is neither A, nor not A. Whatever else this statement may mean, it does concede that *maya* has a positive existence.

Sikhism denies the doctrine of *maya*, thus conceived. As ignorance and nescience have no positive existence, they merely being aspects of the self-limited involuted Spirit, likewise, *maya*, as such, has no positive existence. It is merely a way of saying that the individual consciousness perceives the Reality only in the form of partial knowledge, which is there on account of involution. As the darkness is merely a negative aspect of the light of the sun, similar is the case with ignorance and nescience.

“What is there positive to which we can give the name of *maya*? What positive activity is the *maya* capable of?”

The human soul is subject to the pleasure and pain principle in its very nature, as long as it operates on the individuated plane of consciousness.

Again, “*maya*, in the form of a snake, entwines to render human mind immiscible with the real, and the more it is accepted at its face value, the more it misguides. Rare indeed is such a man who overcomes and casts it away.” Further, “what is *maya* except a befooling magic trick? Yea, a dry blade of grass afire, a passing shadow of a summer cloud, a momentary flooding after a tropical rain, for him who is out of communion with God.”

What do these dissertations on *maya*, mean? in the Sikh scripture?



Maya is the antithesis of *moksha* in Hindu thought. But *maya* is not the antithesis of the Absolute Reality. There is no incompatibility between the brahma and *maya*, for the former is not opposed to the Many. It is advanda, non-dual, that is, it has no opposite being outside all classification. To be precise, ‘classification’ is exactly *maya*. *Maya* as a noun in Sanskrit is derived from the root *matr*, ‘to measure to form, to build, to lay out a plan’, the same root from which Graeco-Latin words, ‘metre’ ‘matrix’, ‘material’ and ‘matter’ are obtained. The fundamental process of measurement is division. Thus, the Sanskrit root, *dva*, from which we get ‘divide’, is also the Latin root of ‘dus’, and the English, ‘dual.’ To say, then, that the world of ‘facts’ and ‘events’ is *maya* is to say that the words ‘facts’ and ‘events’ are terms of-measurement rather than the real itself, per se.

‘Measurement’ is setting up bounds of all kinds, whether by descriptive classification or by screening. Thus, the ‘facts’ and ‘events’ are as abstract as lines of latitude or feet and inches, metres and centimetres. This is not to be confused with the “Idealism” or “Monism” of Western philosophy, for all concrete things are not, in reality, illusion, unreal, or just, the One. They are not unreal and illusory, because *maya* is not non-existence; it is a wrong mode of apprehension. It is not ‘One’, because ‘One’ is a thing, a mode of measurement and, therefore, itself *maya*. To join the ‘many’ into ‘one’ is as much *maya* as to separate the many from one. The world, as we perceive it, is made up of surfaces and lines, of areas of density and vacuity, but the *maya*’ concept of the Sikh scripture says that these forms and appearances, these things and events have no “own-being”, *svabhava*; they do not exist in their own right, but only in relation to one another, like “the spark of a dry blade of grass”, or like “the fleeting shadow of a summer cloud.” Concretisation and formalisation is *maya*, when the human mind attempts to comprehend and control that which impinges upon his consciousness. This is the unreal world of Buddhism, the world of ‘name and form’, *nama-rupa*. When the Sikh scripture says that “*maya* is a snake which entwines human consciousness, and whosoever takes it at its face value, him *maya* misleads and confuses”. This it means that man confuses his measures with the world so measured,

of identifying money with wealth, fixed convention with fluid reality. The Sikh doctrine of *maya* points out the impossibility of grasping the actual world in the verbal net of man's mind and the fluid character of those very constructions he thins artifacts. This world of *maya* escapes both the comprehension of the philosopher, and the grasp of the pleasure-seeker, like water from a clutching fist, "like the fleeting shade of a summer cloud."

This interpretation of the concept of *maya* in Sikh terminology has far-reaching consequences in so far as it pulls the Hindu mind out of the slough of indolent introspective pre-occupation, and subjectivism, generated by the belief that the whole world of the appearances in which man is born to pursue his socio-political life, is no more real than a phantasmagoria in the minds of the gods above. By giving a foundation of solid reality to the world of appearance, this re-interpretation of the concept of *maya* conforms to a sense of reality, a feeling of urgency and an objectivity to the whole frame of mind of man, which is necessary for the all-out effort to speed up the evolutionary process through the human will, and this is the core of the precepts of Sikhism, as a way of life.

Ethics

The fact that religious experience, per se, is non-moral, has been known to Hindu thought from the very beginning. In the West, it has been clearly recognised only in recent times. It was Dr Otto who in his *Idea of the Holy* about a quarter of a century ago, made this point finally clear. In the Judaic religious tradition, for all practical purposes, religious life and ethical conduct appear to have been made identical. The ten Commandments of Moses are ethical precepts. In the Koran, it is these ethical commands which are presented as the essence of religion. Western scholars are sometimes shocked at the stories narrated in the ancient Hindu texts, those of the conduct of gods that does not conform with strict ethical standards and about which the narrator of the story expresses no moral horror and passes no censorial judgement. From this, the Western reader erroneously concludes that ethics has no place in the Hindu religious practice and tradition. This is far from the truth. From the

very beginning, it has been recognised that ethical conduct is the very foundation on which the life of a religious man must be based. The rules of conduct of the Buddhist shramans, the formulary of conduct of Jain bhikshus, the daily rules regulating a Brahmin's life, bear ample testimony to the fact that the relation of ethics to religious experience is well recognised and established, though a man with secular sovereign status is exempted from moral censure.

This moral exemption, however, is more a juridical rule rather than a moral precept. The case of non-human gods, though is obviously on a different law. In Sikhism, while it is recognised that the religious experience belongs to a category of values which has a unique status and ontological structure in its own right, it is, nevertheless, insisted that without strictly ethical purity of conduct there is no possibility of any advance in the religious experience. A religious life, not strictly grounded in ethical conduct, or a religious discipline which ignores the ethical requirements, is considered as a highly damaging error. "The seed of the teachings of the Guru cannot germinate except in the field of ethical conduct, constantly irrigated by the waters of truth." A man of religion is ever characterised by ethical deeds, honest living, sincerity of heart, and a fearless passion for truth. Nanak maketh this emphatic declaration, let all men ponder over it. Ethical conduct is the only true foundation of human life on earth." Sikhism, thus, lays a stress on morality which raises the moral law to a higher and absolute status such as was not so in the Hindu and Buddhist thought.

The Buddhist and Brahminic systems appear to tacitly assume that morality is a means to felicity and that it is not obedience to a law which exists in its own right as demanding obedience, what Immanuel Kant called, the "Categorical Imperative." It is true that by them moral conduct is regarded as governed by the cosmic law, called, the law of karma, which means that good deeds bring good results and evil deeds bring evil results. "The evil deeds I did in past lives have now become impediments and misfortunes for me." Sikhism, however, raises ethical conduct to a higher and more independent, absolute status and makes it as the true expression of the harmony of human personality with the Will of God. All ethical

conduct, therefore, is not merely conducive to good results such as happiness, but it is primarily an act of establishment of concord between the human personality and the Person of God. Since this concord is the highest end and the goal of human existence and endeavour, it is, therefore, the basic ingredient of the highest activity of man which is religion. Thus, Sikhism while recognising that the order of Reality which is revealed as numenon to the human experience does not fall under the category of ethical experience, it unequivocally emphasises that the two cannot be divorced or separated, and that the nature of the numenon is such that its realisation is impossible without ethical conduct. The ethical category and the numenal category are distinct, but are structurally and inseparably joined.

In this way, the Sikh thought fuses the Hindu and the Semitic traditions on the subject of ethics and religion.

The Free Will

European philosophy and theology have been much exercised on the subject of the 'free will', while the Hindu tradition has considered this subject as of minor importance. The explanation for this lies in the analytical understanding of the concept by both the traditions. In European thought, an individual is conceived of as a permanent fixed entity, basically separate from the rest of the world which is his universe. It is argued that without freedom of will there is no moral responsibility, there can neither be guilt nor punishment, either in society or hereafter, before the throne of God. This problem has not much troubled the Hindu thought which considers that there is no such thing as a completely free and stable entity, called, 'the individual' and secondly, the Hindu argues, that if the human will is not free then what does the term, "freedom", mean? What instance

shall we bring forth with which to contrast the supposed determination of human will?

Our notion of "freedom" is inalienably derived from our own experience to which we give the name of "will." Whatever, therefore, we may mean by "freedom", it is ultimately in the terms of our own "will", that we give meaning to it. Thus interpreted, to say that human will is free, is an axiom, as well as a tautology. There is no meaning in the thesis that human will is not free, for "free" is that which is like unto the human will. The trouble, however, arises when we give to the expression, "free will", a meaning which we have not derived from our experience of our 'will', but which have been superimposed by our intellect. Thus, we like to think that, "free will" is that power of volition of the human individual which is totally uncaused and unconditioned. The concept of "self-caused inevitability" and "freely chosen determinism" would appear as puzzling, if not altogether non-sensical to the Western mind. A little reflection, however, will show that such a "freedom" does not, and cannot, in fact, exist, and further, that, if it did and could exist, it will destroy all foundations of



“moral responsibility”, sense of guilt, and justification for ‘punishment’ either here or hereafter. To begin with, there are the facts of heredity, the environment, and the subconscious mind. There is not much doubt that the individual is the product of his heredity, the inner mechanism of which the science of biology has discovered recently in the fertilized germ-cells and its genes, which make all the organic cells that make up the body including the brain and the nervous system. This pattern we inherit from our parents and our ancestors is certainly a determination of the choices that we make in our lives from time to time.

Psychology has revealed to us that subconscious layers of human mind as the seat of instincts, emotions, and intuitions, for those who faithfully follow the dogma of the *Church Council of Constantinople* (553 A.D.) which anathematised the doctrine of transmigration in the race during evolution of millions of years or, accumulated, for those who hold the doctrine of metempsychosis as fundamental, accumulated in the course of untold numbers of previous births and rebirths of the individual. They are certainly a determinant throughout a man’s life in the matter of his choice and the conduct that follows it. Again, from outside, the social environment is active in continuously influencing and moulding the individual’s mind, and thereby his power of choice and conduct. These three factors, the physical, the environmental and the hereditary, are there as a fact, and their powers of influencing the human power of choice cannot be denied. In this sense, there cannot be a “free will”, as an uncaused and unconditioned factor which solely determines as to what choice, in a given situation, an individual will make. But, even if there were such a “free” will, it will entail disastrous consequences. If a man’s actions are not free, when they can be shown to be casually chained to his character, the sum total of his heredity, past experiences and environment, then the only circumstances in which it would be proper to call a man “free”, would be those in which he acted independently of his received character, that is, of his habits, desires, urges, and perspective on life, and all the rest. But, if this agent of “free” action, is not to be equated and identified with that which is subject to particular desires and urges, which is circumscribed by a given

environmental and circumstantial set-up, which is devoid of character, motives, persistent interests and the like, then who is this agent of ‘free’ choice, the “he?” Such a notion of “free” will completely dissolves the agent of action; a person with such a “free” will is a completely disembodied and unidentifiable entity.

Such an entity can neither be blamed nor praised. Indeed, such an entity would be truly like the “Superman” of Nietzsche, “beyond good and evil.” Nor can such an entity be held responsible for what it does, for, it would be clearly unreasonable to hold an individual responsible for his actions, if we did not think there was a cause and effect connection between his character and his conduct. When we can show that there is no such connection, as, for instance, an act is committed as a result of coercion, we do not normally hold him responsible. The reason is not that the one act is “uncaused” and ‘free’, while the other is ‘determined.’ In one case, the cause lies in the character of the individual over which he has, in some sense, control while in the other case, he has no such control. As we gain new knowledge about the kinds of causes that affect conduct, we change our mind about the kinds of behaviour for which we should hold men responsible. The recent shifts of stress in the science of Penology in the modern world, and the ancient wisdom of the East and West, which iterated that an individual is ultimately responsible for nothing, must be appreciated in the context of this analysis, and not in the superfine frame of reference of ‘determinism’ and ‘free will.’

“A man reaps only what he sows in the field of karma,” declares the Sikh scripture. It simultaneously says that, “Say, what precisely is it that an individual can do out of his free choice ? He acteth as God Willeth.” And the Bhagvadgita asserts that, “God sits in the heart of every creature with the consequence that all revolve in their set courses, helplessly tied to the wheel of *maya*.” That man is free to choose and act to some extent, and to the extent that he is so, to that extent alone he is morally responsible and subject to praise and blame, is a true statement. That there is no such entity and no such entity is conceivable, which is wholly ‘uncaused’ and ‘undetermined’ and further that in the ultimate analysis, the whole area of individuality can be linked to a cause of causes

which are supra-individual, is also a true statement and these two true statements are not self-contradictory or incompatible with each other, constitutes the Sikh doctrine on the subject.

This brings us back to our immediate experience which seems to carry its own certitude with it, that, in some sense, we are 'free', for, we have the notion of 'freedom' as the core of this experience. Sikhism, while implicitly taking note of the three factors which determine the powers of human choice, lays stress on this fourth factor, perpetually present and operative in the human mind, which possesses the autonomous power of choice. This autonomous power is the divinity in man, according to Sikhism and it is this core around which the whole human personality is built. It is, at heart, "the source of all human misery, as well as the panacea of all his ills."

"How may man demolish the wall of nescience that separates him from God? By being in tune with the Will of God. And how shall we know the Will of God. Nanak answers: It is embedded in the very core of human personality." It is this autonomous power of free choice which is given to every human personality and by virtue of which the effects of the other three determining factors of human choice are interfused and, thus, the act of free human choice gives birth to a new event, which is not wholly determined and which is not a mere combination and aggregational consequence of all these four factors, but which is a new event, unique in nature and potently capable of giving rise to other similar events in the future. It is this power of free choice that is included in man's original heritage which has the capacity to go beyond this heritage, and thus, within the limits given, a human being is free to shape his own destiny. Nor are the other three factors, his received character, the environment and the subconscious mind, merely accidental and fortuitously superimposed upon the individual, for they too are the fruits of his past karma of uncounted previous births, and thus, they are self-determined, self-caused, result of free choices earlier made. When and why and how did an individual make the first free but wrong choice? This question relates to the First Things, and, therefore, ex hypothesis, the individual comprehension fails at this point: "the son observeth and knoweth not the birth of his father."

Doctrine of Karma

The doctrine of karma is not the same as the doctrine of pre-destination of the Christian theology. Karma is, in a sense, fate, self-caused inevitability, not pre-destination, for, within the limits given (and these limits constitute the karma inherited from previous births), a man is free. This karma is not 'fate', because all the time we are making our own karma and determining the character of our further status and births. The doctrine of karma as understood in higher Hinduism, and as expounded in Sikhism, merely teaches that our present limitations are traceable to our acts of autonomous choice in our past lives, and as such, our karma is a source of rewards and punishments which we must enjoy and endure. However this idea differs from the idea of 'fate', as commonly understood in European thought, in as much as it is not inexorable, for all the time we are making our own karma within a context, the core of which is always free and autonomous.

Existence of Evil

The existence of evil, it might be said, is the main reason for the keen interest in religion and, therefore, the explanation of evil is the chief problem of theologies and religious philosophies. Whether it was God who created evil, and whether evil is due to misuse of the gifts of free will, are problems which constantly occur and recur in almost all religions of the world. But, the presence of evil, as a de-tranquilliser and disturber of the composure of the human mind, cannot be ignored or argued away, so much so that perceptive minds regard it as the preponderant characteristic of the existential human situation.

The main trend of Hindu thought on this problem is that since the world itself is unreal, the existence of evil in it is not of greater concern to the individual than the world itself. He asserts that the proper course for the human soul is to seek *mukti*, liberation or unison with God by renouncing and discarding this vain show of appearances, called, the world. The Hindu, thus, is not very much concerned to prove that evil does not really exist in the world, or to explain why God allows it to exist. Since the world itself is no more than a phantom and an insubstantial dream, the evil itself cannot be of a more enduring



substance, and, at any rate, it is of no direct concern to the man of religion.

Sikhism cannot and does not adopt this view, because Sikhism does not accept the ultimate dichotomy of matter and spirit, and does not accept as an independent entity, the principle of illusion, *maya*. Since Sikhism postulates that religious activity must be practised in the socio-political context of the world, the problem of evil is very much a real problem to Sikhism as it is to the European thinker. Sikhism, therefore, returns almost the same answer to the problem of evil which the European pantheist gives, namely, that since God is all things and in all things, evil is only something which is a partial view of the whole, something which appears as such, when not seen from the due perspective. Sikhism asserts that there is no such thing as the independent principle of evil, as some theologies postulate, although there are things in this world which are evil. This antithesis of evil and good, according to Sikhism, is a necessary characteristic of the involution syndrome involved in, the process of creation of the world. Evil and good appear at one stage of this involution-cum-evolution and they disappear when the process of evolution culminates into the unitive experience of God, just as

the white ray of light splits into its variegated spectrum while passing through a prism and again gathers these multichromatic hues into its all-absorbing whiteness, when it becomes itself again. In the final stage of things, “all evil transmutes itself into good, and all defeat into victory.” When a complete perspective is granted to man by the Grace of God, all evil melts into its source which is All-Good. There is no independent principle of evil in the universe because God is All-Good and, “nothing that proceeds from All-Good can be really evil, and there is naught, which proceeds from any other source but God.”

But this Sikh metaphysical speculation on the ontological status of evil, does not supply a clear cut answer to the problem of evil as man encounters it in his everyday experience and life.

Ours is a time of upheaval political, social, religious and moral; our most urgent problem is to forestall the catastrophe that menaces us, catastrophe of total destruction, and unprecedented unrest and violence. The causes of the present troubles and future dangers can all be traced back to the lack of any root-principles, generally agreed in philosophy, religion and politics. Everywhere, old class structures of society have been undermined by the advent of



democracy. European hegemony and overlordship in Asia and Africa have yielded place to independence or partnership. In religion, the simple faith in the ancient theologies, and in their sacred writings as the explanation of the universe and as the foundation and sanction of morals, has been shaken by the impact of modern science. Civilisation has been disadjusted, and confusion prevails. General consensus is that the present age is mostly concerned, not with the world of ideas, but with the world of things, material things that we make and use, sell and buy. Though physical sciences, technology and economics are of immense value to mankind, it is not anywhere in that world that we may hope to find the solution to our problems, and that solution, whatever it might be, lies in the world of ideas. Men's actions are determined by their ideas and not vice versa, as fanatical Marxists fondly hope and obstreperously assert. Right ideas are those that lead to good actions, and good actions are those that are known to lead to welfare. Wrong ideas are those that lead to opposite results, suffering and disaster. Welfare means everything worthwhile, material, intellectual, moral and spiritual welfare.

To discover wherein welfare consists and to find ways to attain it, constitute a continuous enquiry, discussion, study, meditation and argument. Thus, the ancient problem of evil is reopened and the explanation of it that monotheistic theologies give, namely, to argue it away at the transcendental level, appears unsatisfying : the two World Wars of our times, for instance. If God is omnipotent and benevolent, why are there wars ? The answer that the ontological

status of evil is negative and non-existent, or the answer implicated in the *Book of Job*, constitute an impressive argument and a magnificent poem, respectively, but in the face of the concrete evil, the latter appears a sterile philosophy and the former an evasion, but no straight answer. In the case of a dualistic theology that concedes two real and positive opposing powers, good and evil, it would appear that if God has created a maleficent power, the power of evil, of negation and denial, then God is not all Benevolent, but if this power is co-equal and co-existent then God is not All-powerful. The problem of evil may be a mere abstraction, but there are problems of evil everyday in tangible and concrete situations, and they raise not merely the philosophical questions about the status and origin of evil, but also what, is the moral imperative for man, in dealing with evil situations, in day-to-day life.

Sikhism takes direct and full cognisance of this aspect of the problem. While it denies evil an ultimate status in the structure of Reality, it squarely faces the concrete existence of evil in the day-to-day life of man, as well as the agents of evil in human affairs.

“The cannibals say ritual prayers of Islam, and the assassins strut about as practising Hindus All concern for human decencies and respect for ethical conduct has disappeared and the evil rules supreme.”

Sikhism calls upon all men of moral perception and spiritual awakening to oppose the agents of evil, the evil-doers and their aides singly, through appropriate organisation, to oppose relentlessly, till the end, till this evil is destroyed or contained. The Light of God, that shone through the Sikh Prophets to guide mankind is unambiguous and uncompromising on this point : “O, God of Benedictions, this blessing above all, we do ask of You : the will and tenacity to tread the path of good promoting actions and fearlessness in opposition to the agent of evil?” “The Light of Sikhism is for the supreme purpose of urging men to destroy and extirpate evil-doers.”

But, since according to Sikh metaphysics, evil is just a passing phase, a phenomenal occurrence, neither there in the beginning nor there at the end, and, therefore, having no substance or real existence, why should any man of understanding bother to oppose it or to destroy. or contain it ?



Sikhism answers this question. The ancient Hindu insight into the scientific laws governing character formation, tells us that, “what a man does, what he attitudinises, that he becomes.” To tolerate evil; to co-exist with it, and not to confront it, is to accept and compromise with it. Such acceptance and compromise are antivirtuous passivity and negative life style and the destiny of ethical and spiritual negation is hell. A negative personality is a naked personality. In the absence of a proper covering of virtue and merit, there is no more frightful fate that can overtake man: “On its predestined march towards hell, a naked soul looks truly frightful.”

Jacob Boehme in his *Signatura Rerum* tells us, “What is evil to one thing, that is good to another. Hell is evil to the angels, for they are not created thereunto, but it is good to the hellish creatures. So also heaven is evil to the hellish creatures, for it is their poison and death.”

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) wrote in his, *Heaven and Hell*: “No punishment is from the Lord, but from Evil itself; because Evil is so joined with its own punishment that they cannot be separated.”

By co-existence and non-confrontation with evil things, man is utterly degraded from his essential humanity, and becomes a hellish creature, and thus, his punishment is great.

“Fall and rise, rawness and ripeness are known and seen hereafter in the next world.”

Numenon and Samsar, or Reality and Appearance

Samsar is the principle of change, which determines the world of phenomena and in Hindu thought and in some other systems of metaphysics, it has been

argued that on this account it is unreal. It is presumed as axiomatic that the real must not be infected with change. The basic formula of Sikh dogma, with which the Sikh scripture opens, is proceeded by the exegetic statement that “all change, all evolution, all that is characterised by the time-process, is ultimately real.”

The numenon, the order of Reality, which is revealed to the human mind through gnosis, therefore, is not something which is fundamentally different and away from the phenomenon, altered in the gnosis is not that what really is, but it is the mode of perception and the quality of prehension of the individual, which is transformed, thus revealing the vision of the numenon. It is this very mundane and the material world and the phenomena which is fresh and differently prehended and cognised by human consciousness, a consciousness that is enlarged and uplifted.

Sikhism, therefore, is in agreement with the aphorism of the great Buddhist philosopher, Budhagosa who declared, *that yas-samsaras tan-nirvanam*, that is, “the Flux and the Absolute are the same.” “This world of fleeting appearances that you see, is, in fact, the true face of God and as such, is revealed to the consciousness of emancipated man.”

Images from the internet

Sirdar Kapur Singh (1909 – 1986)

Sirdar Kapur Singh was a multifaceted personality, the only person honoured with the title of *National Professor of Sikhism* by the Akal Takht. He was a Sikh theologian, political thinker, parliamentarian and a prolific writer adept at very fine articulation of Sikh thought in contemporary times. Besides proficiency in English, which he played with elegantly, he had great command over Farsi, Arabic and Sanskrit in addition to Gurmukhi. As a gifted intellectual he was well informed in philosophy, history and literature in general. He presented Sikh thought and interest at many forums throughout his life. He was amongst the best Sikh writers that the twentieth century produced.



Sri Guru Granth Sahib

(Genesis, Contributors, Reverence and Recitation)



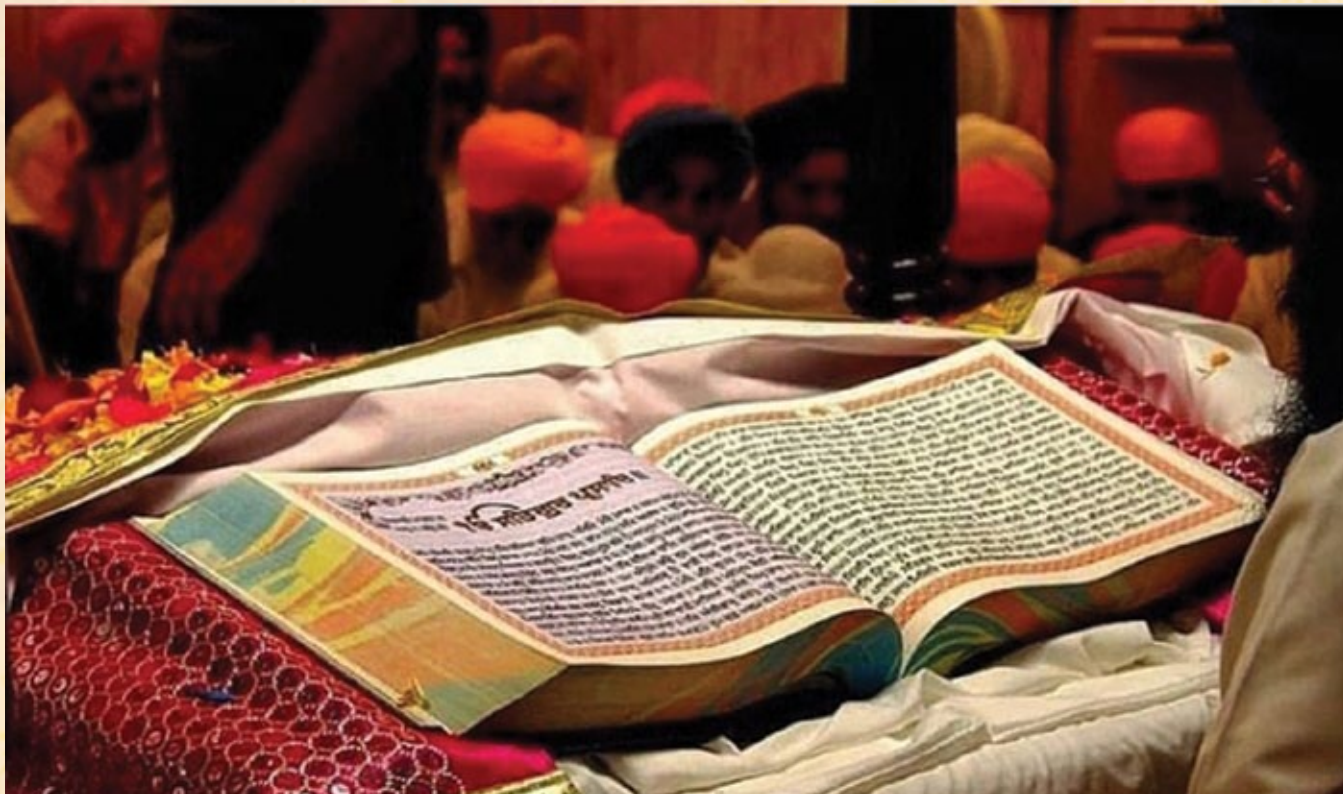
Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGSS) is Guru Eternal for the Sikhs. Since 1708, on the declaration by Guru Gobind Singh, SGSS is regarded by Sikhs as the final, sovereign and eternal living Guru after the lineage of Ten human Gurus. Its first comprehensive version was a collaborative effort of Guru Arjan (1563–1606) and his trusted associates, particularly



Bhai Gurdas (1551–1636) and Jagana Brahmin of Agra. It was completed in 1604 and was called *Adi Granth*.

Adi Granth was installed by Guru Arjan at Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar with Baba Budhha ji as its first *granthi* (priest). The oldest surviving manuscript version of *Adi Granth* is enshrined at the Guru Nanak Dev University's archives (Manuscript No. 1245 dated to c. 1599). This was later updated by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 and is known for eternity as *Guru Granth* (SGGS) installed at all Gurdwaras and most Sikh homes.

This article briefly reviews the evolution of SGSS, its various authors/contributors, the prayers, musical *ragas* in which various hymns have been set and some commonly followed religious practices on reverence, upkeep and recitation for practicing Sikhs and for the many sections of society in this world.



Evolution

It is known that a number of versions, primarily based on writings of the first three Gurus and their contemporaries, were in circulation by the late 16th and very early 17th centuries. To discourage and put such proliferations to rest, the Fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev took upon himself to prepare an authentic version.

He began by compiling the sacred scripture for the Sikh community sent his associates to collect the circulating hymns of the Gurus and convinced Baba Mohan (born 1536), eldest son of Guru Amar Das, to give him the collection of religious writings of the first three Gurus, which he did after some persuasion. Having obtained authentic material, Guru Arjan selected and edited the hymns for inclusion, with Bhai Gurdas as his scribe. He called this compilation as *Pothi Sahib* (same as the *Adi Granth*).

Here mention needs to be made about two other contemporary versions, or Birs as the Granth is often referred to by Sikhs. The *Kartarpur vali Bir* and the *Bhai Banno vali Bir*. Bhai Banno (1558-1645), a devout Sikh was a contemporary of Guru Arjan Dev. When the *Adi Granth* was compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604, he asked Bhai Banno to take it to Lahore for

binding. During this journey, Bhai Banno is reported to have made another copy in which some addition/alterations were made, including the insertion of a hymn by Mira Bai. However, Guru Arjan installed the original *pothi* at Harmandir Sahib and returned the other to Bhai Banno which he installed in his house at Village Khara Mangat.

Gurmukhi of 17th century: from the oldest version of Guru Granth Sahib: the Kartar Puri Beed inscribed around 1650 A.D.

ੴ ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ ॥
 ਹਰਿ ਮਨ ਮੋਹਨ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ॥
 ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ॥

The original *Adi Granth*, known also as the *Kartarpur Vali Bir* is in possession of the Sodhi family of village Kartarpur and placed at Gurdwara Thum Sahib. The originality of this master copy scribed by Bhai Gurdas under direct supervision of Guru Arjan Dev had been vouched for by top Sikh scholars, including Bhai Jodh Singh after thorough scrutiny of the holy text. This bears the original signature of Guru Arjan Dev ji.

The original copy of *Adi Granth* was initially kept by Guru Hargobind at his home but was stolen by his grandson Dhir Mal. Some thirty years later, the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur forcibly recovered this but were then instructed by the Guru to return it.

Centuries later, the ‘original’ SGGS emerged from obscurity in 1849 following annexation of the Punjab when the Granth and its golden palki were “discovered” by the British to be in custody of the Lahore royal court. Later, an application was received from Sodhi Sadhu Singh of Kartarpur and in 1850, the volume was returned to his family. Ever since, it has been a ritual for descendants of Dhir Mal (the Sodhi family) to display the *Adi Granth* for darshan or public viewing at Gurdwara Thum Sahib.

In 1706, the *Adi Granth* had been revised, rather updated by Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the Tenth Sikh Guru at Talwandi Sabo, Damdama (*photo below*). In spite of being a prolific writer himself with



Great reverence at Gurdwara

all the powers of authority, he did not add any of his own hymns but 115 hymns penned by Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675), the Ninth Sikh Guru. This second rendition is known as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS)*. This version of SGGS is venerated by Sikhs as their eternal Guru and installed in every Gurdwara and at most Sikh homes.



SGGS primarily contains the compositions of six Sikh Gurus: Guru Nanak, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Although their compositions form its dominant part, this also contains the poetic teachings of thirteen *Bhakti* movement saint poets, two *Sufi* Muslim poets as also of 11 Bhatts, most of whom were bards in the court of Guru Arjan Dev.

The SGGS is in *Gurumukhi* script which was developed and standardised by Guru Angad Dev. Though commonly (but erroneously) regarded as a script of the Sikhs, this is the manner in which Punjabi has since been written. The official versions of SGGS are produced in Amritsar by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). Their printers are the only authorised worldwide publishers of the holy scripture while the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee is the authorised printer and supplier of copies of the SGGS for outside India.

Since the early 20th century, SGGS has been printed in a standard edition of 1430 *Angs* (pages); prior to the nineteenth century, only handwritten copies were prepared. The first printed copy of SGGS was available in 1864. Any copies of SGGS deemed unfit to be read or are not in good shape, are duly cremated in a ceremony similar to that for cremating a deceased person.

The 1430 page text is of two parts:

An introductory section consisting of the *Mool Mantar*, *Japji Sahib* and *Sohila*, composed by Guru Nanak; SGGS starts with the *Mool Mantar* whose opening words are *Ek Ongkar, Sat Naam, Karta Purakh, Nirvair, Nirbhau, Akal murat, Ajunisebhang, Gur Prasad*. The main body thereafter comprises compositions of Sikh Gurus, interspersed with those of several saints, bhagats, poets, sufi saints and bards/bhatts from various parts of India.

Over the decades, SGGS has reportedly been translated into various languages, including *Lahnda* (Western Punjabi), Braj Bhasha, Kauravi, Sanskrit, Sindhi and Persian. SGGS is now also available in English and Spanish. Dr Gopal Singh Dardi (1917–1990), the eminent Sikh scholar and educationist completed the first full translation of the SGGS into English in 1960. In 2000, the French translation was completed by Dr Jarnail Singh of

Toronto, Canada. A Mexican Sikh, Babaji Singh Khalsa (1947–2006) translated SGGS into Spanish over a 30 year period starting in 1975 using Dr Gopal Singh's English version as base material. A copy of this version was presented at Hazoor Sahib, Nanded by his widow in 2008.

Significant Contributions

Although SGGS predominantly contains hymns of the Sikh Gurus, there are significant contributions from several Hindus seers and Sufi Muslim saints. They lived from the 12th to the 16th Century, came from the highest to the lowest castes, from different regions of India and practiced a wide variety of beliefs and professions. They included several saints, bhagats and poets including a farmer, a barber, a butcher, a weaver, a *chamaar*-and even a king.

The thought process and secular approach of Guru Arjan Dev is very clear, as during the compilation and he was more focused on contents of the message rather than the messenger and from where it came. To an ordinary mind, it would be unthinkable, even in the 21st century to include the verses of “low caste untouchables” in a holy book but SGGS has 541 verses by a weaver (Kabir) and 41 by a *chammar* (Ravidas) among the many others. In doing so, the Guru decimated the repugnant boundaries between the so-called highest and the lowest caste.

Contributions from the Sikh Gurus in SGGS range from 62 hymns by Guru Angad Dev to 2218 compositions by Guru Arjan Dev. Compositions penned by persons other than the Gurus range from a single line by Bhagat Surdas to 541 hymns of Bhagat Kabir. In fact Kabir's hymns make up almost 60 percent of such compositions followed by 14 percent by Bhagat Farid.

Compositions of the Sikh Gurus

Guru Nanak Dev was born in 1469 at Rai Bhoi ki Talvandi village, now Nankana Sahib, passed away at Kartarpur, both places which are now in Pakistan: Son of Khatri parents Kalyan Das Mehta (Mehta Kalu) and Mata Tripta, he was “Founder” of the Sikh faith. SGGS has 974 of Nanak's hymns. Two of these *shabads* are in the memory of Bhai Mardana, the Guru's life long companion and rabab-player. In fact



the SGGS starts with Guru Nanak's *Mool Mantar*. Guru Nanak also composed first parts of the Sikh *Aarti*, ode to the Creator.

Guru Angad Dev (born at Matte di Sarai, Muktsar, Punjab in 1504, passed away at Amritsar in 1552). Son of Hindu Khatri parents Pheru Mal and Mata Ramo and named Lehna, he was the Second Sikh Guru. Guru Angad is credited with developing and standardising the *Gurumukhi* script, which literally means "from the Guru's mouth". It is now the standard script of the Punjabi language in India and elsewhere. SGGS contains 62 of his hymns. In addition, he is also known as the consolidator of Guru Nanak's hymns.

Guru Amar Das (born in 1479 at Basarkea, passed away in 1574 in Goindwal, Punjab): Son of Hindu Khatri parents Tej Bhan and Mata Lachmi, he was the Third Sikh Guru. He was an innovator who introduced religious preaching known as the *Manji* system by appointing trained clergy in different

parts of India. He wrote and compiled hymns into a *Pothi* (book) that ultimately formed basis of the *Adi Granth*. Guru Amar Das also established Sikh traditions relating to the naming of a child, conducting weddings (*Anand Karaj*) and funeral rites. He also selected the site in a village for the temple which the fourth Guru Ram Das started building Darbar Sahib, and now universally the Golden Temple. SGGS contains 907 of his hymns, including Anand Sahib which is set in *Raga Raamkali* and is a part of the daily recitation.

Guru Ram Das (born in Lahore in 1534, passed away in 1581 at Gondwal, Punjab): Born as Jetha to Khatri Sodhi parents Hari Das and Anup Devi, he was the Fourth Sikh Guru and son in law of Guru Amar Das. He also expanded the *Manji* organisation for clerical appointments which was started by Guru Amar Das. Guru Ram Das is also recognised as founder of the holy city of Amritsar. SGGS contains 679 of his hymns, most of which he composed in the Indian classical music notes, or as *Ragas*.

Guru Arjan Dev (born in Goindwal in 1563, passed away in Lahore in 1606). Son of Guru Ram Das and Mata Bhani, he was the Fifth Sikh Guru, the planner, collector, contributor, compiler and editor of the first official version of SGGS known as *Pothi Sahib* or the *Adi Granth*. He completed construction of Darbar Sahib at Amritsar which had been started by the fourth Sikh Guru and had the Adi Granth installed there with Baba Buddha as its first priest or *granthi*. Guru Arjan was a prolific poet and composed 2,218 hymns (more than a third of hymns in SGSS). One of his prayers commonly recited in Sikh households is the *Sukhmani Sahib* (literally Prayer of Peace and Happiness). It is a set of 192 *padas* or stanzas made up of 24 *ashtapadis* of 10 hymns) and appears on pages/Angs 292 to 296 of SGSS.

Guru Tegh Bahadur (born at Amritsar in 1621, martyred in Delhi in 1675): Born Tyag Mal, he was the son of Guru Hargobind (the Sixth Guru) and Bebe Nanki and was the Ninth Sikh Guru. SGGS contains 116 of his hymns which were incorporated in the *Adi Granth* by Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Sikh Guru in 1706 at Damdama. His hymns which are spread over pages 219 to 1427 cover a wide range of subjects pertaining to the nature of God, human attachments, body, mind, sorrow, dignity, service, death and deliverance.

There are no writings of the other four Gurus in Guru Granth Sahib.



<https://www.dashmeshdarbarnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/FirstPrakash.jpg>

Other Contributors

Bhagat Beni can be considered a contemporary of Guru Nanak as he lived sometime between mid-15th to the mid-16th century. He was a well educated scholar. He has three hymns included in the SGGS on several pages (61, 974, 1192, 1351 and 1390).

Bhagat Bhikhan (born in Kakori near Lucknow in 1480, passed away in 1573): Bhikhan was a medieval Indian saint. There is some confusion whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim but certainly he was one of the most learned men during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) and was a contemporary of several Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Ram Das. Two of his hymns are included in SGGS (page 659).

Bhagat Dhanna (born in Dhudwa, Tonk in Rajasthan in 1415, passed away in 1475). He was born in a Dhaliwal family, was a mystic poet and a Vaishnav devotee. He went to *Kashi* and got initiation from Swami Ramananda. After returning, he spent time in farming and serving the needy and holy men with dedication and devotion. His four hymns appear in SGGS (on pages 488, 835, 995 and 1192), one of which is recited in the invocation *Aarti*.

Baba Farid (born in 1173 in Kothewal near Multan, passed away in 1265 at Pakpattan). His full name was Farid al-Din Masud Ganj-i-Shakar, also Fariddudin Shakarganj, a disciple of Qutubuddin Bahkhtyar Kaki and co-founder of the Chishti order. He was a 12th-century Punjabi Muslim preacher and mystic who went on to become one of the most revered and distinguished of Muslim mystics. The town of Faridkot in Punjab in India is named after him. About 134 compositions attributed to Farid are in SGGS (pages 488, 1377, 1382, 1384).

However, there was also Sheikh Farid II. Sheikh Brahm, also known as *Farid Sani* or *Shaikh Brahm Sahib* or *Farid the second* of Patan, was the 11th in succession to Baba Farid Ganjshakar. He passed away in 1552. Legend has it that Guru Nanak visited Sheikh Brahm before heading for Mecca. There is general consensus among historians that the couplets of Sheikh Farid in SGGS were actually penned by Sheikh Brahm and not by Sheikh Farid Shakarganj, as Guru Nanak had met him during his travels. It is also possible that these verses were written by several persons, using the common name Farid.



Depiction of Bhagats Ravidas, Kabir, Namdev and Pipa

Bhagat Jaidev (born in 1170 in Kindu Bilvã, Birbhum, West Bengal according to one source but near Jagannath Puri in Odisha in another, later passing away in Odisha). Bhagat Jaidev whose childhood name was Pardharmrik was a saint and poet. He is best known for his composition *Gita Govinda* which describes the relationship between Krishna and the gopis of Vrindavan. Two of his hymns are found in SGGS (on page 505).

Bhagat Kabir (born in 1398 in Varanasi, passed away in 1448, but dates differ). Kabir was born in a Muslim family of weavers but was strongly influenced by the Hindu *bhakti* leader Ramananda. Kabir is a well known household name even today largely because of his use of the common man's simple language and local dialects. He was a prolific orator/ writer using very simple language. Kabir's teachings led to formation of the *Kabirpanthi* sect which is a north India-based community of both Muslim or Hindu ancestry. They recognise Kabir as their Prophet. Some 541 verses/hymns penned by Kabir are included in SGGS, virtually spread over the entire Granth Sahib from page 91 to 1377 indicating the great appreciation his writings by the Gurus.

Bhagat Namdev (born on 26 October 1270 in Narsi, Hingoli, Maharashtra, passing away on 3 July 1350 in Pandharpur). Namdev was a poet and saint from Maharashtra, belonging to the Varkari sect of Hinduism. His 60 hymns included in SGGS are spread between pages 345–1351.

Bhagat Parmanand (born in Kannauj, UP in 1483), in a Hindu Brahmin family, was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. One of his hymns is included in the SGGS on page 1253.

Bhagat Pipa (born at Gagaron present day Jhalawar in Rajasthan on 5 April 1425). Known variously as Pratap Singh Raja Pipaji, Rao Pipa, Sardar Pipa, Sant Pipaji, Pipa Bairagi or Pipanand Acharya, he was from a Khichi Chauhan Rajput family. Pipa, the king of Gagaraungarh abdicated his throne to become a mystic, poet and saint of the *Bhakti* movement. His hymn is included in SGGS (on page 695).

Bhagat Ramananda (born at Allahabad in 1400, passed away at Banaras in 1476) : From a Brahmin family he was a poet, popularly known as a Vaishnav saint and considered to be reviver of the Bairagi sect. His hymn is recorded in SGGS (on page 1195).

Bhagat Ravidas (born in Varanasi, on 30 January 1399, passed away there in 1540). Ravidas was a mystic poet-saint of the *Bhakti* movement, being of spiritual bent of mind, banished by his father for refusing to practice the family leather business. He is venerated as a guru in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh as also in the Punjab.

Bhagat Ravidas's teachings have had great impact on people, particularly among those belonging to "low" castes, which has led to emergence of a separate religion *Ravidassia*. His followers call themselves Ramdasias who are mostly *chamaars* (described as untouchable and at the lowest rung in the Hindu caste system). There are 41 hymns of his in SGGS (on pages 93, 345–346, 486–487, 525, 657–659, 694, 710, 793–794, 858, 875, 973–974 and 1106). In several of his verses, he refers to himself as Ravidas *Chamaar*.

Bhagat Sadhna (born in 1180 at Sehwan Sharif, Hyderabad Sind now Pakistan, passed away in Sirhind, Punjab, India). Bhagat Sadhna, also referred to as Sadhna Qasai (butcher), was born in a Muslim family who were butchers by profession. Sadhna was drawn towards spirituality and as a result, used to have spiritual discussions with holy men who came to his shop. He was a poet, saint and a mystic. One of his hymns is in SGGS, on page 858.

Bhagat Sain was born in village Sohal, Tarn Taran, Punjab in 1400, passed away in Varanasi in 1490. Bhagat Sain was a barber in the court of Raja Ram, the king of Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, one of the 12 renowned disciples of Ramanand. His hymn is on page 695 in SGGS, and part of the Sikh *Aarti*.

Baba Sundar was the great grandson of Guru Amar Das. He is known for his six-stanza composition, the *Ramkali Sadu*, incorporated in SGGS on pages 923-924 a form of folk poetry prevalent in rural Punjab. It is commonly recited at conclusion of a reading of the SGGS.

Bhagat Surdas (born in 1529, passed away at Varanasi in 1573). His original name was Madan Mohan and is said to have been born in a high-ranking Brâhmin family. Bhagat Surdas has only one line in the SGGS on page 1253, “O my mind, abandon the company of those who turn away from God.”

Bhagat Trilochan (born in Barshi, Solapur, Maharashtra in 1269). He was a celebrated saint of the *Vaisya* caste of Hinduism and a contemporary of Bhagat Namdev. Five of his hymns are in SGGS (pages 92, 525–526, 695).

Banis of the Bhattis



Bhattis were learned minstrels/bards who earned their living essentially singing in courts and social functions. Several of those listed were inter-related and attended the court of Guru Arjan Dev. Their compositions and singing were mostly in praise of the Sikh Gurus, mainly Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev, thus their contributions are in different class than being purely religious hymns. Bhattis whose compositions appear in Guru Granth Sahib are as given below, most of their writings in the form of *swaiyes* (a non raga measure), mainly on pages 1389-1409.

Balvand Rai was a poet, mystic and rebeck player in the court of Guru Arjan. He was a Muslim belonging to the *Mirasi* community who embraced Sikh thought during the time of Guru Arjan. His three hymns are included in SGGS in *Ramkali* measure. He co-composed this ballad of *Ramkali* with his rebeck-player cousin Satta Doom which includes a total of six hymns (page 966 of SGGS).

Bhatt Bhalh was a Brahmin bard in the court of Guru Arjan Dev, nephew of Bhatt Bhikha and brother of Salh. His hymn is included in SGGS (page 1396).

Bhatt Bhikha came from Sultanpur Lodhi in Kapurthala district of Punjab. Bhatt Bhikha, like some others was also a Brahmin bard. He first presented himself at Guru Amar Das's durbar at Goindwal, was the eldest of the Bhattis and became a Sikh, initiated by Guru Arjan Dev. His two hymns are included in SGGS (pages 1395, 1402).

Bhatt Gayand was a Saraswat Brahmin by birth, became a Gurmukh after listening to Guru Arjan Dev. Younger brother of Kalshar, he was also a bard in the Guru's court. There are 13 hymns (*Swaiyas*) in SGGS (pages 1401-1404). He introduced *Waheguru* for the first time in Sikh literature and recitations.

Bhatt Harbans was another Brahmin bard in the court of Guru Arjan. He was a man of letters and had intimate knowledge of the culture of India; his two *Swaiyas* are in SGGS (page 1409).

Bhatt Jalap was son of Bhikha and brother of Mathura and Kirat. He was also a bard in the court of Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan Dev. His five hymns are present in SGGS (page 1394-1395).

Bhatt Kalshar was a Brahmin bard in the court of Guru Arjan, whose 54 hymns are incorporated in SGGS. He was elder brother of Gayanand and a nephew of Bhikha. Traditionally, Kalshar is believed to be a collector of hymns of other Bhattis which were incorporated into SGGS (pages 1392–1394).

Bhatt Kirat was the son of Bhikha and a brother of Jalap, also a Brahmin bard in the court of Guru Arjan Dev. His eight hymns are included in SGGS (pages 1389–1410).

Bhatt Mathura too was a Brahmin bard in the court of Guru Arjan and author of fourteen *Swaiyas* which appear in SGGS (page 1409). Starting with

Guru Nanak, he traces the history of the first five Sikh Gurus. He was also trained in martial skills during the time of Guru Hargobind and fell a martyr in the battle of Anritsar which, according to Bhatt Vahi Multani Sindhi, took place on 14 April 1634.

Bhatt Nalh was a Sikh Brahmin bard in the court of Guru Arjan Dev. His 16 hymns are present in SGGS (pages 1398–1400). In his writings, he introduced two new Chhands, *Jhoolna* and *Radd*.

Bhatt Salh was younger brother of Nalh and a nephew of Bhikha, also a bard in the court of Guru Arjan. His three hymns are present in SGGS (page 1396).

Reverence, Care and Recitation



Beautifully rendered in classical ragas are various banis of prayers of the Sikh faith. The text of SGGS is on 1,430 *angs* (pages) and includes 5,894 *sabads* (line compositions). These are poetically rendered and set to a rhythmic north Indian classical form of music. Most of the text is set into 31 main *ragas* with each *raga* subdivided according to length and author. In most cases, the writer and the raga form the prefix. For example, hymn starting with *Asa Mahala Pehla* means that the hymn is set in *Raga Asa* and is written by the First Guru (*Mahala* refers to Guru). Throughout the text, the word *Rahao* (meaning pause) recurs after a hymn. It is also recited with the text though not while singing that hymn.

Guru Granth Sahib is not only accepted Guru of the Sikhs but is also unconditionally revered and to some extent, even idolised. It is elaborately wrapped in special fabrics and placed on a pedestal higher than anything else in a room. It is ceremoniously opened every morning and closed in the evening. In urban, well-endowed gurdwaras it is placed in an air conditioned room for “comfort”. Any person of any faith can enter a gurdwara with bare feet, covered head and pay obeisance, standing in front of the holy book with folded hands, making an entirely voluntary donation and lowering the forehead while kneeling on the ground as a mark of respect. After that the devotee may sit cross-legged anywhere along with the congregation. In recent years, chairs have been installed for the elderly in a section of the hall.

Any person who can read *Gurmukhi* can read and recite SGGS and its recitation by an appointed priest is not at all mandatory. It can be read at any time of the day keeping in view specific hymns for specific occasions and time of the day. One can recite a particular hymn or a complete prayer at one sitting. While being in the presence of SGGS, before or after recitation, it is mandatory to remove one’s shoes, cover one’s head and not possess any tobacco or other narcotics. While in the presence of SGGS or during the singing of hymns, no verbal praise, *wah wah* or clappings are permitted at all. Current stipulations demand that whenever the holy book is transported from one location to another, it must be escorted by five Sikhs (*Panj Pyare*).



Most beautifully, various banis or prayers of the Sikh faith are rendered in classical ragas

| <i>Japji Sahib</i> | <i>Jaap Sahib</i> | <i>Chaupai Sahib</i> | <i>Tivaprasad Sawaiye</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Anand Sahib | Sukhmani Sahib | Rehras Sahib (only shabads) | Kirtan Sohila |
| Asa di Vaar | Ramkalee ki Vaar | Jaitsree di Vaar | Basant ki Vaar |
| <i>Chandi di Vaar</i> | Aarti | Shabah Hajare | Sidh Gosht |
| Baavan Akhree | Laavan | Salok Mahalla 9 | Baraa Maahaa |
| Tukhari | Baraa Maaha Manjh | Dakhni Ongkar | <i>Ardaas</i> |
| <i>Sawaiye Deenan</i> | Bhagat Bani | Shalok Kabir ji | Shalok Farid ji |
| Bhattan de Savaiye | <i>Akal Ustat</i> | <i>Chandi Charitar</i> | <i>Zafarnama</i> |
| Suchaji | Kuchaji | Funnhe | Chaubolas |
| Ramlakee Sadd | Vaaran te Vadhik | Raag Mala | |

Sikh Prayers and their Musical Measures (Ragas)

Sixty *ragas* alongwith with pages on which they first appear in SGGs are given below. The entire text is sung in specified ragas except some parts in the beginning such as Japji Sahib and the end (*sawaiyes*).

The 31 main Ragas are indicated in bold types, others are their combinations/mixtures. While selecting the ragas to be used, Guru Arjan omitted those ragas which had a jubilant tone such as Megh and Hindol. Likewise, Raga Jog and Dipak were omitted for their melancholy approach.

| Rag Asa, on page 8, | Gujari on page 10, | Gauri Deepaki p. 12 | Dhanasri on page 13 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Gauri Poorabi p.13 | Sri on page 14 | Majh page 94, | Gauri page 151 |
| GauriGuaraireep 151, | Gauri Dakhani 152 | Gauri Chaitee p.154 | Gauri Bairagan p. 156 |
| GauriPoorabi Deepaki p.157 | Gauri Majh p.172 | Gauri Malva p.214 | Gauri Mala p. 214 |
| Gauri Sorath p.330 | Asa Kafi p. 365 | Asavari p. 369 | Asa Asavari p.409 |
| Devchandhari p. 527 | Bihagra page 537 | Vadhans page 557 | Vadhans Dakhani 580 |
| Sorath page 595 | Jaitsri page 696 | Todi page 711 | Bairarri page 719 |
| Tilang page 721 | Tilang Kafi p.726 | Suhee page 728 | Suhee Kafi page 751 |
| Suhee Lalit page 793 | Bilaval page 795 | Bilaval Dakhani p. 843 | Gound page 859 |
| Bilaval Gound p. 874 | Ramkali page 876 | Ramkali Dakhani 907 | Nut Narayan p. 975 |
| Nut page 975 | Mali Gaura p.984 | Maru page 989 | Maru Kafi page 1014 |
| Maru Dakhani 1033 | Tukhari p. 1107 | Kedara page 1118 | Bhairo page 1125 |
| Basant page 1168 | Basant Hindol 1170 | Sarang 1197 | Malhar page 1254 |
| Kanada page 1294 | Kalyan page 1319 | Kalyan Bhopali 1321 | Parbhati 1327 |
| Parbhati Bibhas 1327 | Parbhati Dakhani 1344 | Bibhas Parbhati 1347 | Jaijaivanti p.1352 |

Nitnem



The daily *Nitnem* (daily practice) of a Sikh consists in recitation of five prayers, an integral part of the life of a Sikh. Its components and their average duration in minutes are *Japuji Sahib* (15), *Jaap Sahib* (15) and ten *Savaiyye* (5) which form the set of morning prayers; Sikhs often combine the morning prayers with the *Anand* (bliss) *Sahib*, *Shabad Hazare* (10) and the *Sukhmani Sahib* (60–70). *Sodar Rahrass Sahib* (15) is the evening prayer and *Kirtan Sohila* (10) is recited before one sleeps.

Guru Granth Sahib begins with *Japji Sahib*, preceded by *Mool Mantra*, which represents the core of Sikh philosophy. Most of the *Jaap Sahib*, composed by Guru Gobind Singh, forms first part of another Sikh scripture, the *Dasam Granth*. *Jaap Sahib* has 199 verses, proclaiming the attributes of the supreme truth, *Satnam*. Unlike, *Japji Sahib*, *Jaap Sahib* is composed predominantly in Braj bhasha, Sanskrit and includes many Persian words. The third morning prayer consists of 10 *Savaiyye*. This bani originally forms a part of *Akal Ustat*, praise of the Timeless, also composed by Guru Gobind Singh.

Jaap Sahib, 10 *Savaiyyes* and *Akal Ustat* are not a part of SGGS.

Several Sikh prayers are time and occasion-specific. Thus *Rehras Sahib* is an evening prayer, *Baraa*

Mahaa contains verses devoted to each of the 12 months and verses pertaining to a specific month are recited at the start of that month. *Laavan* is the prayer sung while conducting a Sikh wedding and then there are specific hymns which are recited after a funeral. *Aardas* is recited as a closing after a prayer session/ function and *Raag mala* describes the various *ragas* used in SGGS.

The guidance of SGGS is also sought for naming a new born child which by itself is an interesting statistical exercise. The priest opens the holy book at random in the presence of the family. The first letter on the left hand page is announced and the family is asked to give the child any name they like which starts with that letter.

An uninterrupted recitation of SGGS, *Akhand Paath*, is meant to be completed in 48 hours at the rate of approximately two pages per minute. This is done by a relay of readers day and night in convenient sittings. They can be paid readers, householders or public persons. There is no evidence when the presently-popular practice of conducting or ‘sponsoring’ an *Akhnad Paath* started. *Sampath Paath* refers to completing the recitation of SGSS in a week while an open *Paath* has no time frame as it is upto the individuals.

Dr HLS Tandon, Ph.D. (Illinois, USA)



Dr HLS Tandon, 77, is a scientist by profession having earned his MS and Ph.D degrees from the University of Illinois, USA. After nearly five decades in pursuit of his scientific efforts he is presently concentrating on research and writings on Sikhism and related subjects.

To Be a Sikh!

S Harbhajan Singh Sapra, now in his 81st year, has written this for the next generation of youth, his desire being to present the vitality of Sikhism to those studying in modern educational institutions, in India and all over the world.

Sikhism is the youngest and the most visible of the world's religions, but is not a passive faith. It advocates active participation of mankind in the process of transformation to becoming a better Society.

The Sikh religion has evolved from the simple but saintly-life essentials of the Ten Sikh Gurus who dedicated their lives to the well being of humanity without distinction of colour, caste, creed or religion.

| | <i>Gurta Gadi Period</i> | <i>Life Span</i> |
|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Guru Nanak Dev ji | 1469-1539 AD | 1469-1539 AD |
| Guru Angad Dev ji | 1539-1552 AD | 1504-1552 AD |
| Guru Amar Das ji | 1552-1574 AD | 1479-1574 AD |
| Guru Ram Das ji | 1574-1581 AD | 1534-1581 AD |
| Guru Arjan Dev ji | 1581-1606 AD | 1563-1606 AD |
| Guru Hargobind ji | 1606-1644 AD | 1595-1644 AD |
| Guru Har Rai ji | 1644-1661 AD | 1630-1661 AD |
| Guru Har Krishan ji | 1661-1664 AD | 1656-1664 AD |
| Guru Tegh Bahadur ji | 1664-1675 AD | 1621-1675 AD |
| Guru Gobind Singh ji | 1675-1707 AD | 1666-1708 AD |



(image: www.mrsikhnet.com)



Revelation in Sikhism is truly unique, the theory of incarnation being rejected. No Sikh Guru claimed to be an incarnation of God, but preached that there is only One God (*Ek Onkar*), present everywhere, in everyone throughout the universe.

In Sikh philosophy every human being could have direct link with God through recitation of the Divine Name as *Bani* (Hymns) is Guru and Guru is *Bani*.

The Sikh Gurus lived normal lives of the householder and were regarded with great reverence

for their preaching. People turned to them for guidance, to follow their simplicity, love, wisdom and moral piety. Guru Nanak Dev ji preached his gospel at places which became known as *Dharmsals*, where his followers would gather to listen to his discourses on the new faith.

The practise of *Sangat* (people assembled for meditation and listening to hymns) and *Pangat* (devotees seated on the floor), food from the community kitchen (*langar*) originated at these *Dharmsals*, which became to be known as *Gurdwaras* by the seventeenth century as a new edifice on the Indian religious scene. The Gurdwara is manifest symbol of the Sikh Faith, with its indefinable spirit imbibed by millions of believers.

Devotees gather at Gurdwara with great devotion, to hear recitations from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, listen to *Shabad Keertan* (soulful recitation of hymns rendered in classical style - accompanied by musical instruments) throughout the day. The Sikh Faith invokes humanity to “recite the name of God, work honestly and share their earnings with the less privileged”.

The Fifth Guru Arjan Dev ji chose the hymns of his predecessors, hymns of Saints (*Bhagat*) of different religions of similar belief and compiled the *Granth* (Pothi Sahib) which was installed at the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar in 1604 AD. Baba Buddha ji was appointed as first high priest by Guru Arjan Dev ji, who himself sat on the floor with utmost respect and recited hymns with the congregation.

Completion of Pothi Sahib was done by Guru Gobind Singh ji, including also hymns of the 9th Guru, Tegh Bahadur Sahib ji. This compilation of 1430 pages was to be known as Guru Granth Sahib ji. In 1708 AD, Guru ji ordained His Sikhs to “Recognise and adopt Guru Granth Sahib ji as the Living Guru from hence to eternity.” Further, to “consider the Guru Granth as representing Body of the Guru. From now on, all those who wish to connect with The Guru, find the way in hymns of Guru Granth Sahib ji.”

Extreme humility is dominant theme of the Sikh Hymns. All Ten Sikh Guru’s abhorred the three evils of Greed, Worldly Attachment and Ego. Guru Gobind Singh ji created the concept of *Panj Pyarey* (Five Beloved Ones) and formed the Khalsa



(painting from Central Sikh Gurdwara Board)



(Image: <https://kaurlife.org/>)

through the baptism ceremony (*Khanday Bata Di Pahul* - Amrit) with a congregation of 80,000 Sikh followers, at Anandpur Sahib in March 1699.

Guru Gobind Singh ji then requested these five Singhs to serve Amrit to him, as their first disciple. The Guru thus passed on Guruship not to another individual but to corporate body of the Sikhs (Five Beloved Ones), as *Guru Khalsa Panth*. Tenth Guru himself became the first member of the body. The miracle had happened: people divided as Hindus, Muslims, low caste and 'high caste' became united as one Brotherhood, that of the Khalsa.

The social revolution started by Guru Nanak Dev ji had achieved its aim. Those who took Amrit from the same bowl, were resurrected as *Sant Sipahis* (Saint Soldiers), to serve society without distinction.

Guru Gobind Singh ji gave the unique, distinguishing identity to Sikhs, naming the men as *Singhs* and Sikh women as *Kaurs*, giving them both dignity and differentiation.

Guru Gobind Singh ji also ordained his Sikhs to carry five essentials (*Panj Kakars*):

- ❖ **Kesh**, unshorn hair as adorned by the creator.
- ❖ **Kanga**, comb to keep hair neat and tidy.
- ❖ **Kara**, steel bracelet worn on the right forearm, motivation for righteous and bravery.
- ❖ **Kachhera**, an under garment of practical design for personal hygiene and chastity.
- ❖ **Kirpan** or **Siri Sahib**, short sword as the symbol of sovereignty.

The Kirpan is also used to symbolically 'steel' *Karah Prasad* (sanctified food offering) at Sikh religious congregations.

The Sikh religion invokes blessings of the One God for entire humanity and in the daily invocation, prays for all in the world, *Sarbat Da Bhalla*.



At Kartapur Sahib

On Sikhism



Swami Vivekanand: Guru Nanak was born in the sacred land of India. He gave a message of love and peace to the entire world and preached this in his teachings. He had affection for every one and his arms were always outstretched as if to embrace the entire world. There was no difference between a Hindu and Muslim for him: he was the common Guru to all.

Dr BR Ambedkar: Sikh religion is the spiritual home for all those who desire to live in peace, with respect in the world.

Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan: Guru Nanak tells us to have no feeling of enmity for anyone. God is in everyone. Forgiveness is love at its highest; where there is forgiveness, there is God himself.”

William Warbert: The proclamation that “No one is my enemy and no one is a stranger”, is absolutely wonderful! That one gets along with everyone (SGGS Page 1299) has been infused in the heart of every Sikh by their Gurus.

Acharya Rajneesh ‘Osho’: Sikhs are the most beautiful people, perhaps in the entire world. The only community one can rely upon in our country, are the Sikhs. Most trustworthy, reliable, simple, courageous, and unafraid of anything.

Historian Falcon: A Sikh remains the same under all circumstances. He is strong, intelligent, and sober by nature. He is a highly diligent, dauntless and a wise human being. Not bound in the chains of casteism, he has a loving attitude towards all.

Dorothy Field: Pure Sikhism is far above any Hindu rituals, having a distinct place as one of the world’s important religions – as long as Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness. Judged from the pragmatic standpoint, Sikhism ranks as the very first in the world.

Qazi Nur Mohammad: The valour of Sikh soldiers and their courage is undisputedly outstanding. What is extremely significant is their conduct towards the vanquished: for the Sikh soldier, there is self-discipline and ethical values even in victory.

HL Bradshaw: The proximity of this religion (Sikhism) with science, is yet another imperative that this faith must be the way for future generations.

Sri Ravi Shankar: Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji must be taught to all children, not only in India but throughout the world.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya: Every Hindu family must have at least one child as a Singh, one who can take care of this world, our family.

Milton Friedman: Sikhs not only provide food for India but protect the country. They played a major role in securing India’s freedom. If India comes under the authority of Sikhs, the problems of degeneration and poverty will be resolved, the fear of any foreign invasion will cease to exist.

Bertrand Russel: If some lucky men survive the onslaught of a Third World War, the world devastated by nuclear bombs, the Sikh religion be the only guidance for mankind into the future.

Guru Nanak's first devotee: Daulat Khan Lodi and his 'Modi'

Daulat Khan Lodi (1458-1526) is an interesting historic person particularly from the Sikh perspective and the sub-continent's history as he was the first - and the only - employer of Guru Nanak Dev, as store keeper of the state granary. Bhai Gurdas in his *Vaar* 11, which lists eminent Sikhs of Guru Nanak Dev ji's time, includes the name of Daulat Khan Lodi. This piqued my curiosity to further explore the life of Daulat Khan Lodi, who from being an employer, later became a revered disciple of Nanak. As Bhai Gurdas ji records:

ਦਉਲਤ ਖਾਂ ਲੋਦੀ ਭਲਾ ਹੋਆ ਜਿੰਦ ਪੀਰੁ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ।

Dhaulat khan lodi bhalaa hoaa ji(n)dh peer abinaasee.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 11.13)

(Daulat Khan Lodi was a nice person who later came to be known as a living *pir* and would live for eternity).

The designation of Nawab Daulat Khan Lodi as a living *pir* by Bhai Gurdas drove me to further research on him. Unfortunately there is not much written documentation available on his life, but we are aware that his father, Tatar Khan, had received Sultanpur as his estate (*jagir*) from General Sayyad Khizr Khan (1414-1421).

But let us first begin with some known incidents associated with Guru Nanak Dev ji at Sultanpur, and then go beyond, delve on historic situations not commonly known.

Employment as 'Modi' (store keeper)

During those times, farmers would pay taxes on their revenue in kind and not in cash while Government servants were similarly compensated. The *Modi* was responsible for keeping an account of all in-coming and out-going provisions, was authorised to sell surplus grains in the market and deposit cash in the treasury. In fact, the entire Government system was dependent on efficient performance of the *Modi*. Honesty of this person and his fairness in dealing with people, plus



(image from notesonindianhistory.com)

administration of the staff were prerequisites for the position of *Modi*.

The Afghan noble Daulat Khan was then Governor of Jalandhar Doab with Sultanpur, a town in present day Kapurthala district, as its capital. The Governor of Punjab, based in Lahore at that time, was his father, Tatar Khan Lodi. One of his ministers, Jai Ram, was married to Guru Nanak's sister, Nanaki. In 1494 Jai Ram secured employment for young Nanak as keeper of the Nawab's granaries and stores at Sultanpur. Guru Nanak applied himself diligently to his duties, impressed everyone with his gentleness and open generosity. Daulat Khan was very pleased with the feedback that he got on his new and most honest working *Modi*.

But jealousy....

Within a short time, the honesty, compassionate nature and noble character of Guru Nanak became widely known. It also became common place that as Guru ji was weighing provisions, he was repeating the word *tera*, would go into a sort of trance, forgetting the weighing. Some corrupt persons at the store who had been kept at a distance now saw their opportunity to steal and so began gossip against Nanak for having squandered state assets and in failing to keep proper accounts. The rumours soon reached Nawab Daulat Khan, who instituted audits to check on the inventory as recorded in the ledger books. However, on completion of physical checks, it was established that the store's inventory and books tallied completely: the accounts were correct. In fact, if anything, the state actually owed money to Nanak!

Even if Nawab Daulat Khan had had some suspicions as per his past experience with others, he now had an even greater respect for Nanak, his new *Modi*. The audit of accounts did not uncover anything wrong and Nawab's faith in his 'Modi' grew exponentially.

The Call

Nanak's daily routine at Sultanpur included bathing in the river *Bein* before he sat in deep meditation under a *Ber* tree. One day, Nanak disappeared while bathing in the *Bein* and reappeared only three days later. On the morning of 25 August, 1507 Nanak walked some miles away to a graveyard outside Sultanpur which he then made his new abode. Nanak's disappearance had however sparked rumours, including that he was absconding because of recklessly giving away grains for free. The news of Nanak's miracle spread and people rushed to the graveyard. The Guru's first words were that "there is no Hindu and there is no Muslim". This utterance was considered as heretical and soon reached the Nawab, who sent a messenger asking Nanak to come to his court; however the messenger returned without Nanak.

So on behalf of the Qazi, the Nawab went to the Guru himself, asked if the Qazi was a Muslim or not? Nanak defined the traits of a true Muslim, which was later to be enshrined on page 141 of Guru Granth Sahib. The Nawab asked that then if there was no



difference between a Hindu and a Muslim, why then would Nanak have any issue in offering *Namaz* with them? Nanak immediately agreed and went inside the mosque with them. After completion of prayers, the Nawab asked Nanak why he had not joined in the prayers, and replied, "Nawab ji! Whom would I have joined in prayers? You were here only physically while mentally you were in Kandahar purchasing horses."

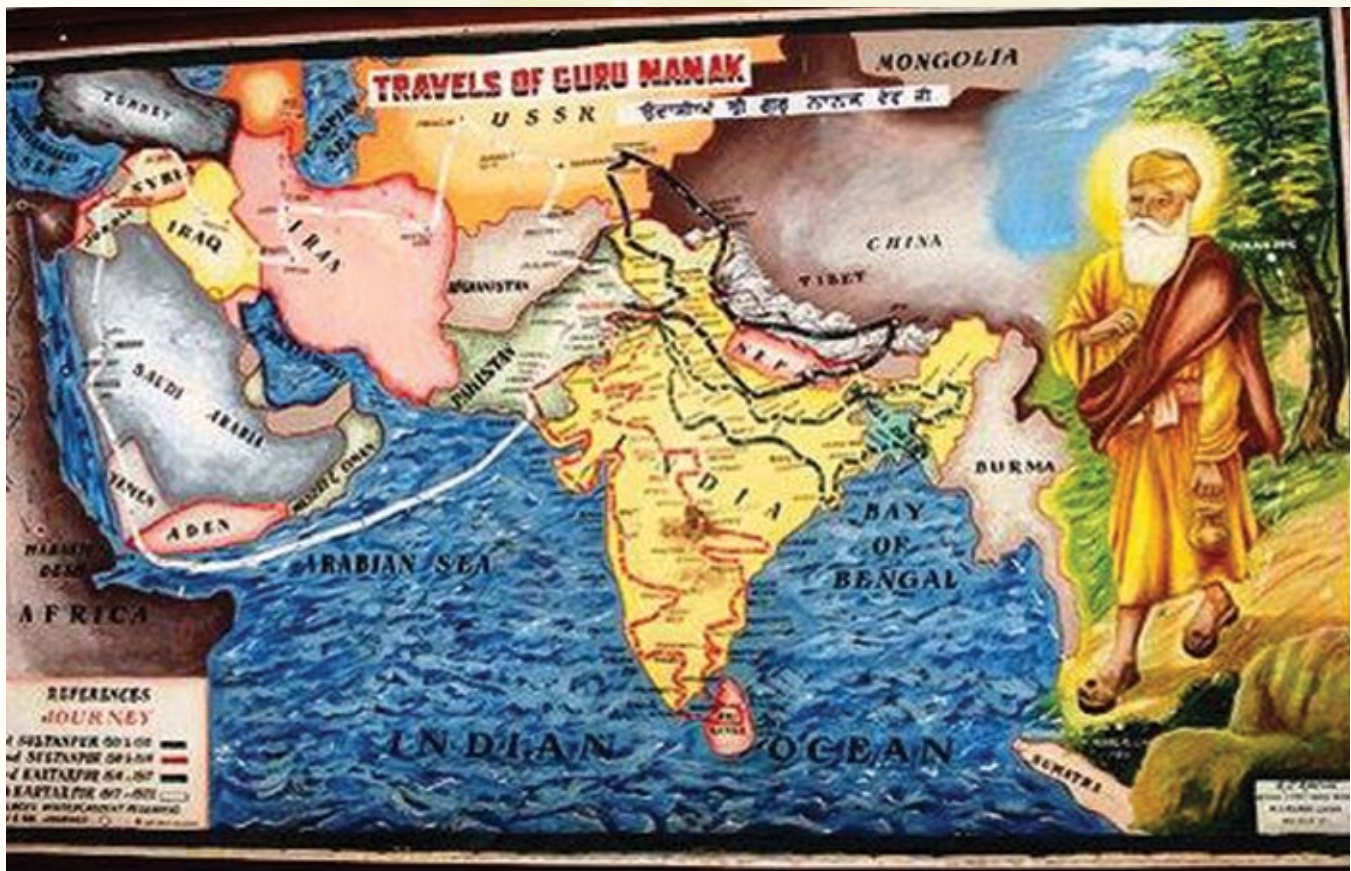
The Nawab countered, "You could then have joined the Qazi !" Nanak responded, "Dear Nawab, Qazi was mentally concerned looking after a new born filly at his home." The Qazi, although surprised, acknowledged this and admitted, "My mare gave birth to a foal this morning. While performing my prayer I was worrying about my foal falling into a ditch." Nanak then said, "Dear Qazi, only those prayers performed with the mind and body fully concentrated are those accepted at the door of God." Nanak then explained the true meaning and virtue of *Namaz*. On hearing this sublime hymn, the Nawab fell at Guru Nanak's feet, saying that "Nanak was a true *faqir*, whose words mere mortals could not easily comprehend."



Gurdwara Sahib at Sultanpur Lodi

The Transformation

Nanak now made his momentous decision heeding to his inner voice. Mankind continued to be separated from one another on the basis of status, religion, creed and race. Nanak decided not to serve in the *Modi Khana* any longer, resigned and soon began on his travels to far distant places to spread his message of universal brotherhood. After the call, he left for his first long journey or *Udasi*. When Guru Nanak returned from his first journey in 1515, his first stop was at Sultanpur where he spent five days meeting his beloved sister Bebe Nanaki and Bhai Jai Ram. Daulat Khan came to visit Guru ji and pleaded with him to stay back in Sultanpur. In an outburst of affectionate admiration, the Nawab even offered Nanak all his authority and vast estates. Guru ji, however, had no interest in temporal possessions.



The transformation brought by Guru ji in Sultanpur is summed by Bhai Gurdas Ji in one sentences:

“ਸੁਲਤਾਨੇ ਪੁਰਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਭੰਡਾਰਾ ॥੨੧॥”

Sulataane pur bhagat bhanddaaraa. 21

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 11.21)

“Sultanpur is the treasure house of devotion (and devotees).”

Thereafter, Guru ji continued to Talwandi via Lahore to meet his parents and soon began his second journey, after spending some months in Talwandi. After completing the second *Udasi*, he returned to Sultanpur in 1518. The next day Bebe Nanaki breathed her last, as if she was only waiting for the return of her beloved brother. Bebe Nanaki had expressed her wish that Guru ji perform her last rites.

Now, the unexplored history

Over time, Daulat Khan had become the Governor of Lahore succeeding his father. At the time of Sikandar Lodi's death (1517), he had opposed Ibrahim Lodi's accession and remained alienated. Daulat Khan was an uncle of Ibrahim Lodi and was very pained by the ruthless killing of innocents in Delhi, unleashed by Ibrahim Lodi upon assuming power. According to SM Latif's book *History of the Panjab* “....a Faqir whose tenets were different both from Koran and the Vedas, was openly preaching to the people, the effect of which it was assumed, might in the end, prove serious to the State. Guru Nanak was imprisoned for seven months where he had to grind corn as hard labour.”



سلطان ابراہیم لودی (۹۲۳ھ-ق)

Sultan Ibrahim Loudi (1517)

It is likely that this treatment of Guru Nanak riled Daulat Khan and he now even more staunchly opposed Ibrahim Lodi. In 1523, Ibrahim Lodi's suspicions grew on Daulat Khan then Governor of Lahore, whom he then summoned to Delhi. However, fearing for his life, Daulat Khan sent his son Dilawar instead. This angered Ibrahim, who threw Dilawar into the dungeons where many former nobles were now hanging from the walls. Fearing that same fate, Dilawar managed to flee back to Lahore. After hearing the terrible tales from Dilawar, Daulat Khan felt that his only chance against Ibrahim Lodhi was to seek help from the outside, thinking of the Mughal Babur. Dilawar was dispatched to Kabul, where he was able to enlist Babur's support.

Daulat Khan along with Alam Khan, Governor of the Parganas of Rapri and Chandwar, actually invited Babur to advance into the Punjab,



A depiction of Babur by Auguste Racinet

which stage Ibrahim Lodi retaliated by evicting him from Lahore. Babur now advanced towards Lahore in 1524 and as he approached the city, it became clear that Daulat Khan was no longer in command. On his arrival at Lahore, Babur faced Ibrahim Lodi's Army but shortly routed them in battle and then set the city on fire.

Babur entered the walled city in triumph, decimating many bazaars during his four day rampage. After placing Alam Khan, Ibrahim's rebel uncle as the governor, Babur continued on to Dipalpur. In 1524, Daulat Khan met Babur here but there began a rift between them over sharing of territory in the Punjab. Babur offered Jullundur and Sultanpur to Daulat Khan – but not Lahore – which the latter did not accept and went into hiding. However, Alam Khan was soon overthrown and fled to Kabul. Alam Khan joined hands with Daulat Khan Lodi and with Babur's support, led 30,000 troops, to fight Ibrahim Lodi at Delhi – but was defeated.

In 1526, when Babur again advanced into the Punjab, Daulat Khan fled to Milwat, north of Lahore. Babur laid siege of Milwat and Daulat Khan finally surrendered. On 21 April, 1526 Babur then faced Ibrahim Lodi in the first battle of Panipat and defeated him, going on to capture Delhi and Agra, thus laying foundation of the Mughal Empire in India. This was end of the Lodi dynasty, with the death of Ibrahim Lodi on the battlefield at Panipat. That this historic battle had lasted less than three hours is testament to



The tomb of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat

Babur's strategic planning and execution of war, along with effective use of gunpowder by the Mughals.

Babur appointed Mir Abdul Aziz as the governor of Lahore. Daulat Khan was sent to Bhera but he died on the way. He was a man of refined literary taste, whose personal library was also seized by Babur. It can be said that the act of Daulat Khan Lodi in inviting Babur to invade the Punjab may have been borne out of desire for preservation of his own fiefdom, but its outcome was to be tectonic as it ushered historic transformation of the sub-continent. The Mughal dynasty was established which ruled India for the next 200 years.

But one must always remember that Daulat Khan remained a true devotee of Guru Nanak Dev ji till the end.



Depiction of the first battle of Panipat (1526)



The author seen with his wife on the banks of river Bein

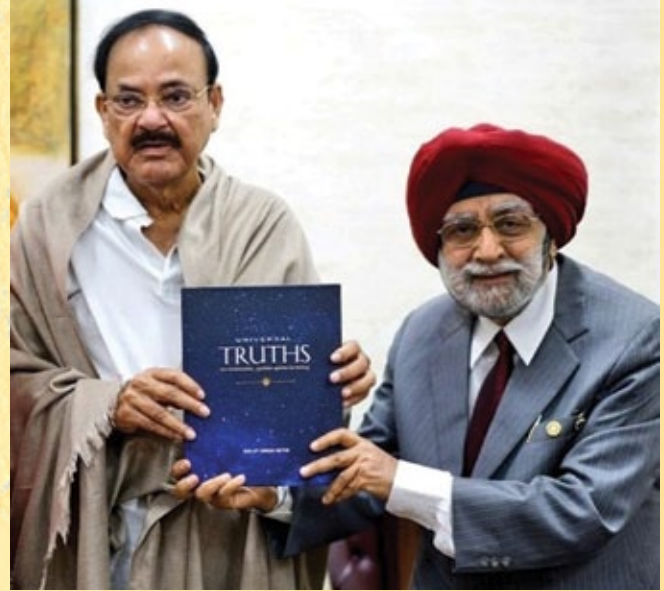
Bhupinder (Bo) Singh

Universal Truths*

(an invaluable, golden guide to living)

The author of this very valuable book, Sardar Daljit Singh Sethi is a multifaceted personality, having been an accomplished sportsman, with a Degree in Commerce and Diploma in Business Management and well set to be part of his family business. However, he opted for a two decade long tough timber business in the forests of Kashmir, later mining at Kota, continuing on to Vadodara where he excelled in stocks and shares.

A thinker, philosopher, and an orator par excellence, his book Universal Truths will surely pave the way for seekers to dive deeper and enter into a truthful, righteous, relationship with communities all around, for the greater good of mankind. Release of the book took place at a simple and dignified event at the residence of the Vice President of India Mr Venkaiah Naidu on 19 November 2019. The book has been promoted by Aura Art of which he is founder.



Book by S. Daljit Singh Sethi, Founder Aura Art, Mumbai ✨

Daljit Singh was born in Jhelum then undivided Punjab in 1938 and was profoundly influenced by his grandfather who was considered as a 'saint' and from whom he imbibed the virtues of serving the cause of humanity. Besides setting up the Kota Heart Foundation and Noble Heart Foundation and a School for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, he initiated many free heart check-up camps followed by free surgeries. He has also organised several public events and speeches on *World Understanding & Peace* and *Peace, Harmony & Integration*, fostering brotherhood. As Additional Chief Convener at Bombay he organised *Hands of Harmony Across India*. In 1994, at All India Level to express solidarity for peace and communal harmony. Daljit was appointed Member of the ICCR, Advisory Committee at Mumbai, in 2008.

Daljit Singh believes that there is a strange spiritual oneness in the trance that an Artist experiences when he explores his creative domain, akin to the experience one gets in Meditation, which results in Art possessing the capacity to elevate and soften the human being. "A true Artist creates Art as a reflection of the Divine glory, wherein the Artist manifests his internal thoughts, which emerge after a meditative period of stillness within: beauty for such an Artist is a reflection of the glory of God".

Daljit Singh Sethi, founder and chairman of Aura Art, has been actively interacting with artists from the north and the west [of India] for 30 years, while Harmeet Singh Sethi the CEO of Aura Art, has been travelling across the country for over 10 years, analysing the works of thousands of artists, through

physical meetings, viewing works physically at shows or via catalogues. An artist is selected after review of their work, background, motivation and thoughts. Eventually, only artist's that repeatedly demonstrate ability to innovate and deliver quality execution are chosen to form part of the *Aura Art Collection*.

As Director of *Aura Art eConnect Pvt Ltd*, Daljit Singh undertakes promotion of artists who are spiritually and sincerely engaged in creating great works of Art – Paintings, Sculptures, Photographs, Prints and so on. With a view to propagate the ideology, heritage and history of Sikhism, the Company also promotes Artists creating Sikh Art.



In the Preface of his book, Daljit Singh Sethi writes:

Waheguru (God) is the continuum of the ultimate, exalted state of supremacy with no beginning and no end whatsoever. By the Will and Command of Waheguru, the Universe with all its innumerable astral bodies and forces – His creation – came into being, all with a pre-ordained, pre-programmed process of evolution. With the passing of time on our planet, various species of life forms evolved, culminating finally in the beautiful form of the human race. And as the human race grew in numbers and spread, social order became imperative. Truths came to be understood, appreciated, followed and established. These were Eternal Truths: intrinsic, pure, unquestionable and unalterable and because they were Eternal with no time constraints, they became, by logical deduction, Universal: in other words, applicable to all domains, in all contexts.

*This book, **Universal Truths**, is a humble attempt to recapture a few of the several gems recorded and interpreted in Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, the living embodiment of the Sikh Gurus who, with great efforts invested all Their*



Daljit Singh Sethi seen with his sons Rishiraj and Harmeet Singh Sethi of Aura Art

lives in enriching and giving final shape to an eternal Guru to guide humanity for all time. For reference and interest, those gems have been put under select subject headings that we identify in our daily lives with and on basis of which the smooth propagation and meaningful existence of the human race is dependent.

In the past, as communities grew and consolidated over time, people grouped themselves according to their different cultures which came to be strongly influenced by different faiths. It was not long before dogmas, myths and superstitions surfaced, trapping communities in pockets too narrowly-focused and pitching them against each other with petty claims and differences. These differences later led to serious animosities which in turn escalated into wars. Chaos spread while invaders took advantage of divisive forces in a bid to establish their own power and authority.

It was during this terrible period, by the Will of Waheguru, that Guru Nanak Dev took birth in the village of Nankana Sahib. It was ordained that Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji would, during His life, streamline faiths

through revolutionary concepts and deliver a comprehensive document of Eternal and Universal Truths appealing to all. His extraordinary approach to life and spirituality raised questions, the answers for which were as radical as they were self-evident. To Him, the world was a place where one could meaningfully live a life of righteousness. To Him, the world was not Maya or Mithiya (illusion) or a place of suffering, but a place that allowed for active service to The Only One, atonement and to live a life of great contentment.

Guru Nanak's conclusively says: "Everything is lower than Truth but higher than Truth is Truthful Living."

It was also ordained that Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji would, in spirit, traverse through the life of each of successive nine Gurus who followed after Him, culminating in final documentation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, an exhaustive treatise on sublime thoughts, principles and doctrines. It endorses the path of strength in the company of God-conscious and God-loving persons, a process, it says, which will help cleanse the individual of his ego and help lead a life of justice, peace and contentment.



It is significant and pertinent that particularly for the Sikhs, Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji is not merely a Holy Granth of principles but the living embodiment of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and all the nine Guru Sahibans who followed His footsteps. Guru Granth Sahib is held in the highest veneration and given the status of a Living Guru for all times to come. Reference to the Guru Granth Sahib is always made as though it were a person, a Living Guru, in whose perpetual: holy presence worshippers sit and sing praises of the Supreme One, Waheguru.



Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji embraces a Single Loving God, the Creator of the Universe and Embodiment of all Virtues. The Benevolence and Altruistic Will of that Supreme Power regulates, guides and maintains the Universe. Heavenly bodies collide and disintegrate on His Command, while new stars and planets take birth from depths of the Milky Way. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient, manifesting Himself in ways that are sometimes awe-inspiring, sometimes serene, sometimes stunningly beautiful, and at most times, most endearing and lovable. His all-pervading presence instills humility in all that we do, as we look upon Him as our constant and trusted Benefactor. Such a feeling of profound admiration, veneration and love of God induces not only individual responsibility but collective and social responsibility as well.

All of this is, in fact, ingrained in the Sikh ideology – hymns are sung with great humility and love for God.

The chanting of hymns in chorus is soul-soothing and soul-searching, unifying all in contemplation of that Supreme Being that resides, though formless, in us and in everything we see around us. God, to the Sikhs, is not only Immanent but Transcendent as well. God is, not only an intrinsic part (Immanent) of the Universe and all that is there in it, but He is outside the Universe too (Transcendent): Eternal, Self-existent. He exists undivided by time, space or changes in the Universe.

“God created the world of life, planted Naam (the Immanent aspect of God) therein and made it the seat of righteousness.”

Though Naam relates to the intrinsic aspect, the Gurus never referred to Naam in a restrictive sense. For Them, the word meant the Highest Power orchestrating the entire Universe. For Them, man is elevated to a higher plane when he abides and works by the word of God and Naam. In fact, They regard man’s birth as an opportunity to attain a spiritually elevated state. “After ages, this invaluable opportunity of human birth is available, but one loses it for nothing.”

The Gurus see God as the “Ocean of Attributes, Values and Virtues.” The opportunity provided to man to live by His ideals is therefore immense.

Dedication of Sikhs to the tenets and principles of their faith, precludes idol worship, asceticism, rituals and self-restraining practices of austerity. Sikhism is a faith that expects one to guide one’s daily life through self-discipline, self-control and active practice of righteousness, resulting in the true elevation of man’s spirit to a sublime plane. Another unique feature of the Sikh faith is the oneness of spirit and mission among all the Guru Sahibans who in Their successive life spans propagated the Faith without any deviation and with absolute reverence and selflessness.

As mentioned earlier, all the nine Guru Sahibans who succeeded Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji were embodiments of His spirit. The sublime flow of spirit from Guru to Guru, ended with the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh ji who, in an act that climaxed the lineage of the Gurus, handed over the Guruship to the last of the Living Masters, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji. Regarded by the Sikhs as the very personification of the Gurus, the Granth Sahib ji is a merging of identities of all the Gurus and Their profound teachings into one single Volume of Eternal Truths.

Singhs – The Lions!

The suffix 'Singh' to every Sikh's name goes back to the days of Guru Gobind Singh ji whose extraordinary self-discipline, mental repose, valour and physical strength made Him conceive the Khalsa Panth. He was driven by the self-imposed martyrdom of His father to combat all that was evil and opposed to justice. The initiation of five chosen Sikhs into the Panth was ceremoniously performed at a huge congregation unmatched in history. The ceremony was marked by the elaborate preparation of the Amrit, nectar. Water was stirred in a large iron vessel with a double-edged dagger (symbolic of the spirit of bravery) to continuous chanting of the Gurbani. With the permission of Sri Guru Sahib ji, 'patashas' were added to the water by His wife to make it sweet. The Amrit was then served to the five Sikhs (belonging to different castes and occupations), baptising and converting them into Singhs... Lions!



The Khalsa Panth was thus born. The Guru then requested the Panj Payaras to baptise Him in turn in the same manner—demonstrating in the process, His remarkable humility and sense of righteousness.

With exemplary earnestness, all the Guru Sahibans, dedicated Their lives to the compilation of the exhaustive Guru Granth Sahib ji. It was as though the Bani (sublime voice) were revealed to Them by Waheguru while They, in turn, recorded and interpreted it living d a life of extreme sacrifice. Their lives truly exemplify the devotion and spiritual strictness with which They followed the Gurbani.

The Guru Granth Sahib ji is a an unique treatise spread across 1430 pages, unique in as much as it incorporates relevant hymns of other religious faiths as well. Along with the hymns of six Sikh Guru Sahibans, the Holy Guru Granth Sahib incorporates the hymns of four Sikh Bards, 15 Bhagats and Saints, and 11 Bhatt authors, both Hindu and Muslim. It is, in spirit, an unprecedented volume of sublime thoughts that the entire human race can draw upon, absorb and abide by. In the history of mankind, Guru Granth Sahib ji is the only scripture completed, signed, sealed and delivered by the founder of the faith during His lifetime. The wisdom contained in this sacred Guru Granth Sahib is the wisdom of Waheguru as Revealed to the Guru Sahibans and a chosen few. This is meant to be read, imbibed and adopted for an enchanted life of contentment and bliss as intended by the Supreme Master.

The Tenth Master, while handing over the Guruship to the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, proclaimed:

*Agya Bhai Akal Ki Tabe Chalyo Panth
As was ordained by the Timeless,
thus was established the Panth.*

*Sabh Sikhian Ko Hukam Hai Guru
Manyo Granth*

*To all Sikhs, let this be the order,
recognise the Granth as your Guru.
Guru Granth Ji Manyo Prakat Guran
Ki Deh*

*The revered Guru Granth is the
visible body of the Gurus.*

*Jo Prabh Ko Milbo Chahe Khoj Sabad
Mein Leh*

Those that seek to meet with Waheguru, delve into the Shabad.

Some gems of wisdom from the unfathomable reservoir have been picked

with care and grouped under various headings and I submit, it is in the humble role of a seeker that I have chosen to tread this arduous path. In doing so, if some others who may seek are motivated to probe deeper and connect with the one and only Supreme Master of the Universe, my purpose in producing this book will have been served in no small measure. This exercise has all been at the behest of Guru Granth Sahib ji in Whose mystical aura I stand in absolute submission. If, as a result of sheer human frailty, some errors may have inadvertently crept into this volume, I seek 'His' pardon in utter humility.

Waheguru The Wondrous Lord

ਸੇ ਦਰੁ ਰਾਗੁ ਆਸਾ ਮਹਲਾ ੧

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ਸੇ ਦਰੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਕੇਹਾ ਸੇ ਘਰੁ ਕੇਹਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਬਹਿ
ਸਰਬ ਸਮਾਲੇ ॥

ਵਾਜੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਦ ਅਨੇਕ ਅਸੰਖਾ ਕੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਾਵਣਹਾਰੇ ॥

ਕੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਰਾਗ ਪਰੀ ਸਿਉ ਕਹੀਅਹਿ ਕੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ
ਗਾਵਣਹਾਰੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਪਵਣੁ ਪਾਈ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਗਾਵੈ ਰਾਜਾ
ਧਰਮੁ ਦੁਆਰੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਚਿਤੁ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਲਿਖਿ ਜਾਣਨਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਲਿਖਿ
ਧਰਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਈਸਰੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਦੇਵੀ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਤੇਰੇ
ਸਦਾ ਸਵਾਰੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਇੰਦ੍ਰਾਸਣਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਦੇਵਤਿਆ ਦਰਿ ਨਾਲੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਸਿਧ ਸਮਾਧੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ
ਸਾਧ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਜਤੀ ਸਤੀ ਸੰਤੋਖੀ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ
ਵੀਰ ਕਰਾਰੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਪੜਨਿ ਰਖੀਸੁਰ ਜੁਗੁ ਜੁਗੁ
ਵੇਦਾ ਨਾਲੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਮੋਹਣੀਆ ਮਨੁ ਮੋਹਨਿ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਮਛੁ
ਪਇਆਲੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਰਤਨ ਉਪਾਏ ਤੇਰੇ ਅਠਸਠਿ
ਤੀਰਥ ਨਾਲੇ ॥

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਜੇਧ ਮਹਾਬਲ ਸੂਰਾ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ
ਖਾਣੀ ਚਾਰੇ ॥

So Dar, Raag Aasaa, Mehla Pehla

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace of the
True Guru.

Where is That Door of Yours, and where is That
Home, in which You sit and take care of all?

The Sound of the Naad vibrates there for You, and
countless musicians play all sorts of instruments there
for You.

There are so many Ragas and musical harmonies to
You; so many minstrels sing hymns of You.

Wind, water and fire sing of You. The Righteous
Judge of Dharma sings at Your Door.

Chitr and Gupt, the angels of the conscious and the
subconscious who keep the record of actions, and the
Righteous Judge of Dharma who reads this record,
sing of You.

Shiva, Brahma and the Goddess of Beauty, ever
adorned by You, sing of You.

Indra, seated on His Throne, sings of You, with the
deities at Your Door.

The Siddhas in Samaadhi sing of You;
the Saadhus sing of You in contemplation.

The celibates, the fanatics, and the peacefully accepting
sing of You; the fearless warriors sing of You.

The Pandits, the religious scholars who recite the Vedas,
with the supreme sages of all the ages, sing of You.

The Mohinis, the enchanting heavenly beauties who
entice hearts in paradise, in this world, and in the
underworld of the subconscious, sing of You.

The celestial jewels created by You, and the sixty-eight
sacred shrines of pilgrimage, sing of You.

The brave and mighty warriors sing of You. The spiritual
heroes and the four sources of creation sing of You.

ਗਾਵਨਿ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਖੰਡ ਮੰਡਲ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡਾ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ
ਰਖੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਧਾਰੇ ॥

ਸੇਈ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਜੇ ਤੁਧੁ ਭਾਵਨਿ ਰਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ
ਭਗਤ ਰਸਾਲੇ ॥

ਹੋਰਿ ਕੇਤੇ ਤੁਧਨੇ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਸੇ ਮੈ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਨਿ
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਿਆ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ ॥

ਸੇਈ ਸੇਈ ਸਦਾ ਸਚੁ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸਾਚਾ ਸਾਚੀ ਨਾਈ ॥

ਰੈ ਭੀ ਹੋਸੀ ਜਾਇ ਨ ਜਾਸੀ ਰਚਨਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਰਚਾਈ ॥

ਰੰਗੀ ਰੰਗੀ ਭਾਤੀ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਮਾਇਆ
ਜਿਨਿ ਉਪਾਈ ॥

ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੇ ਕੀਤਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਜਿਉ ਤਿਸ ਦੀ
ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

ਜੇ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੇਈ ਕਰਸੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਰਣਾ ਜਾਈ ॥

ਸੇ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਤਿਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਹਣੁ
ਰਜਾਈ ॥੧॥

ਰਾਗੁ ਆਸਾ ਮਹਲਾ ੪ ਸੇ ਪੁਰਖੁ

ਜੂੰ ਘਟ ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਜੀ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੇ
ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸਮਾਣਾ ॥

ਇਕਿ ਦਾਤੇ ਇਕਿ ਭੇਖਾਰੀ ਜੀ ਸਭਿ ਤੇਰੇ ਚੋਜ ਵਿਡਾਣਾ ॥

ਜੂੰ ਆਪੇ ਦਾਤਾ ਆਪੇ ਭੁਗਤਾ ਜੀ ਹਉ ਤੁਧੁ ਬਿਨੁ
ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ॥

ਜੂੰ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੇਅੰਤੁ ਬੇਅੰਤੁ ਜੀ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਿਆ ਗੁਣ
ਆਖਿ ਵਖਾਣਾ ॥

ਜੇ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਜੇ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਤੁਧੁ ਜੀ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੁਰਬਾਣਾ ॥੨॥

The worlds, solar systems and galaxies, created and
arranged by Your Hand, sing of You.

They alone sing of You, who are pleasing to Your Will.
Your devotees are imbued with Your Sublime Essence.

So many others sing of You, they do not come to
mind. O Nanak, how can I think of them all?

That True Lord is True, forever True, and True is His
Name.

He is, and shall always be. He shall not depart, even
when this Universe which He has created departs.

He created the world, with its various colors, species
of beings, and the variety of Maya.

Having created the creation, He watches over it
Himself, by His Greatness.

He does whatever He pleases. No one can issue any
order to Him.

He is the King, the King of Kings, the Supreme Lord
and Master of Kings. Nanak remains subject to His
Will. !!1!!

Raag Aasaa, Fourth Mehl, So Purakh

That Primal Being:

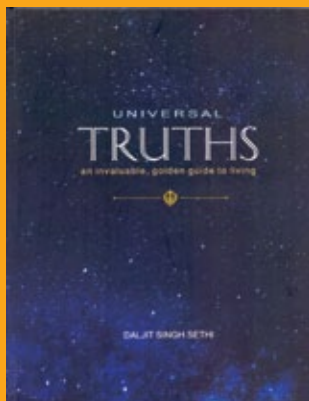
You are constant in each and every heart, and in all
things. O Dear Lord, you are the One.

Some are givers, and some are beggars. This is all Your
Wondrous Play.

You Yourself are the Giver, and You Yourself are the
Enjoyer. I know no other than You.

You are the Supreme Lord God, Limitless and Infinite.
What Virtues of Yours can I speak of and describe?

Unto those who serve You, unto those who serve You,
Dear Lord, servant Nanak is a sacrifice. !!2!!



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The Concept of Death in Gurbani



‘Whosoever has come shall depart;
all shall have their turn.’

All human beings are concerned about death, which is inevitable, but none knows of its time. A fatal accident can cause death instantly, but we still do not think of death and remain immersed in worldly affairs. Science has failed to comprehend death, which is the law of nature as everyone who is born will surely one day die, but still everyone wants to avoid thinking about this. Death is a universal truth which one must face sometime, does not differentiate between the rich or poor or between the young and the old. This is a mystery and no one knows about what happens after death.

Most of us long for heaven after death. Some say that the physical body is subject to death but the soul is immortal, while others do not accept this. For some death is a tragedy from which they may never recover. For others, it is a transformation. Most of us understand that God creates – and destroys – the world, but atheists do not believe in anything.

Let us look to *Gurbani* on the concept of death.

Death is Inevitable

Gurbani teaches that death is inevitable. This is law of nature. Whosoever is born must die. Rich and poor, young and old, all will one day depart.

Guru Nanak Dev has written:

ਜੇ ਆਇਆ ਸੇ ਚਲਸੀ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ਆਈ ਵਾਰੀਐ ॥

(SGGS:474)

Whoever has come, shall depart; all shall have their turn.

ਮਰਣੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ਮੰਡਲ ਮਹਿ ਆਏ ॥

ਕਿਉ ਰਹੀਐ ਚਲਣਾ ਪਰਥਾਏ ॥ (SGGS:1022)

With their death already ordained, mortals come into this world.

How can they remain here? They have to go to the world beyond.

ਜਿਤੁ ਦਿਹਾੜੈ ਧਨ ਵਰੀ ਸਾਹੇ ਲਏ ਲਿਖਾਇ ॥

The day of the bride's wedding is pre-ordained.

Death knows of no Time

Nobody knows the time of death, only God does. Some die in infancy itself, while others die at a ripe old age. Death does not consider time, age or place. Sometimes it occurs because of unexpected causes. It is good that we do not know the time of our death, as if one had known, all progress of life would have ceased.

Guru Nanak Dev said:

ਮਰਣਿ ਨ ਮੂਰਤੁ ਪੁਛਿਆ ਪੁਛੀ ਥਿਤਿ ਨ ਵਾਰੁ ॥ (SGGS:1244)

Death does not ask the time; it does not ask the date or the day of the week.

Sheikh Farid has expressed this as:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਦਰੀਆਵੈ ਕੰਨ੍ਹਰੈ ਬਗੁਲਾ ਬੈਠਾ ਕੇਲ ਕਰੇ ॥
ਕੇਲ ਕਰੇਦੇ ਹੰਝ ਨੇ ਅਚਿੰਤੇ ਬਾਜ ਪਏ ॥
ਬਾਜ ਪਏ ਤਿਸੁ ਰਬ ਦੇ ਕੇਲਾਂ ਵਿਸਰੀਆਂ ॥
ਜੇ ਮਨਿ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ ਚੇਤੇ ਸਨਿ ਸੇ ਗਾਲੀ ਰਬ ਕੀਆਂ ॥
(SGGS:1383)

*Fareed, the crane perches on the river bank, playing joyfully.
While it is playing, a hawk suddenly pounces on it.
When the Hawk of God attacks, playful sport is forgotten.
God does what is not expected or even considered.*

Who Controls Birth and Death?

According to Gurbani it is only God who controls death. He has the power to create and to destroy. None can interfere or order Him. Everyone is under His command. Still, this does not mean that we should not take due precautions or refuse medical treatment.

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਆਵੈ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜਾਵੈ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਈ ॥
(Guru Nanak Dev. SGGS:940)

'Everyone comes here at the Lord's command, leaves in His will and remains merged, too, in the Lord's will.'

ਗੁਣਦਾਤਾ ਵਰਤੈ ਸਭ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਿਰਿ ਸਿਰਿ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਸਾਹਾ ਹੇ ॥
(Guru Amar Daas. SGGS:1055)

'The Giver of virtue (the Lord) is pervading deep within all the beings; He inscribes the time of destiny upon each and every person's head.'

ਕਉਤਰੁ ਕਾਲੁ ਇਹੁ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਪਠਾਇਆ ॥ (Guru Ajan Dev. SGGS:1081)

'In His Will, the Lord has sent us this wondrous death.'



Forgetting death, entangled in worldly affairs

As death is unavoidable and can come any time, one should not entangle ourselves too much in worldly affairs, one cannot take anything with us on death. One should avoid being proud of ones wealth which is not be ours forever. We must become good human beings-and always remember God and death:

ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸਮੁਹਾਲਿਹੁ (mailto:sm@wihl)ਪੰਥੁ ਨਿਹਾਲਿਹੁ ਅਸਾ ਭਿ
ਓਥੈ ਜਾਣਾ ॥ (Guru Nanak Dev. SGGS: 579)

'Let us remember the Lord and Master in contemplation, and keep a watchful eye on the Path. We shall have to go there.'

ਹਮ ਆਦਮੀ ਹਾਂ ਇਕ ਦਮੀ ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਮੁਹਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਬਿਨਵੈ ਤਿਸੈ ਸਰੋਵਰੁ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਜੀਅ ਪਰਾਣਾ ॥ (Guru
Nanak Dev. SGGS: 660)

*'We are human being of a single breath; we do not know the appointed time (of our departure).
Prays Nanak, serve the One, to whom our soul and breath of life belongs'.*

ਮਿਰਤੁ ਹਸੈ ਸਿਰ ਉਪਰੇ ਪਸੂਆ ਨਹੀ ਬੂਝੈ ॥
ਬਾਦ ਸਾਦ ਅਹੰਕਾਰ ਮਹਿ ਮਰਣਾ ਨਹੀ ਸੂਝੈ ॥ (Guru Arjan
Dev. SGGS:809)

*'Death hovers over his head, laughing, but the beast (foolish human being) does not understand.
Entangled in conflict, pleasure and egotism, human beings do not even think of death.'*

Death of Holy Persons

Death of those who continually remember God and lead pure lives, facilitates their union with God. One should lead honest lives, doing good deeds and keep God in our minds. Thus we lessen the fear of death and not shirk death.

Guru Nanak Dev says:

ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਮੰਦਾ ਲੋਕਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜੇ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਵੈ ਐਸਾ ਕੋਇ ॥
ਸੇਵਿਹੁ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੰਮ੍ਰਿਥੁ ਆਪਣਾ ਪੰਥੁ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ਆਗੈ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਪੰਥਿ ਸੁਹੇਲੈ ਜਾਵਹੁ ਤਾਂ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਵਹੁ ਆਗੈ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਾਈ ॥
ਭੇਟੈ ਸਿਉ ਜਾਵਹੁ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਵਹੁ ਤਾਂ ਪਤਿ ਲੇਖੈ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਮਹਲੀ ਜਾਇ ਪਾਵਹੁ ਖਸਮੈ ਭਾਵਹੁ ਰੰਗਿ ਸਿਉ ਰਲੀਆ ਮਾਵੈ ॥
ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਮੰਦਾ ਲੋਕਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਵੈ ॥ (SGGS: 579)

*'Death would not be called bad if one knows how to truly die.
Serve your omnipotent Lord.'*

*'Thus, your path in the world hereafter will be easy to tread.
If you go by the easy route, you shall gather fruit and receive
honor in the world beyond.'*

*'If you go with the offering of meditation, you shall merge
in the True Lord and your honour will be approved.'*

*'You shall obtain place in the Master's mansion; being
pleasing to Him, you shall enjoy the pleasure of His love.
If one knows to die (like this), one shall not call death bad'.*

ਕਬੀਰ ਸੰਤ ਮੂਏ ਕਿਆ ਰੋਈਐ ਜੇ ਅਪੁਨੇ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਜਾਇ ॥ (Bhagat Kabir.SGGS: 1365)

*'Kabeer, why cry at the death of a Saint? He is just going
back to his home (the Lord's court).'*

ਕਬੀਰ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਰਨੇ ਤੇ ਜਗੁ ਡਰੈ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਿ ਆਨੰਦੁ ॥
ਮਰਨੇ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਪੂਰਨੁ ਪਰਮਾਨੰਦੁ ॥

*'Kabir, death, of which the whole world is terrified, is
pleasing unto me;*

*as it is in death alone, that one is blessed with the
Supreme Bliss.'*

The Soul and Death

According to Gurbani our soul is immortal and never dies, even as this body is mortal. Death does not mean the death of our soul. After death the soul of God-fearing persons merges with the Lord as a ray of the sun merges with the sun and a drop of rain water mixes with the ocean.

ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਜਲ ਕਾ ਜਲੁ ਹੂਆ ਰਾਮ ॥
ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲੀ ਸੰਪੂਰਨੁ ਥੀਆ ਰਾਮ ॥ (Guru Ajan Dev. SGGS: 846)

*'As the ray blends with the sun and water merges with water,
so blends the human light with the Supreme Light and
becomes totally perfect'*

ਇਹੁ ਤਉ ਰਚਨੁ ਰਚਿਆ ਕਰਤਾਰਿ ॥
ਆਵਤ ਜਾਵਤ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਅਪਾਰਿ ॥
ਨਹ ਕੇ ਮੂਆ ਨ ਮਰਵੈ ਜੋਗੁ ॥
ਨਹ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਰੋਗੁ ॥ (Guru Ajan Dev. SGGS: 885)

*'The Creator Lord created this creation.
It comes and goes, subject to the Will of the Infinite Lord.
No one dies; no one is capable of dying.
The soul does not perish; it is imperishable.'*

No Mourning after Death

Gurbani teaches us not to weep after the death of a person. We should submit to the Will of God and pray that the departed soul may rest in peace. According to Gurbani, people weep not for the dead but how it affects themselves:

ਮਤ ਮੈ ਪਿਛੈ ਕੋਈ ਰੋਵਸੀ ਸੇ ਮੈ ਮੂਲਿ ਨ ਭਾਇਆ ॥
*'Let no one weep for me, after I die. That is not at all
pleasing to me'.*

ਅੰਤੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਬੋਲਿਆ ਮੈ ਪਿਛੈ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਕਰਿਆਹੁ ਨਿਰਬਾਣੁ ਜੀਉ ॥
*'Finally the True Guru said," When I am gone, sing the
praise of the Pure Lord."*

ਭਗਤੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸੋਈ ਜਿਸੁ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਭਾਣਾ ਭਾਵੇ ॥
*'One who is eased with the Lord's will is a devotee, the
True Guru and the sublime person'.*

Let us not be afraid of Death

Gurbani teaches that we should not be afraid of death but live an honest life, always remembering God. This life is temporary and everyone has to leave this world sooner or later. We should not think of hell or heaven, rather desire to be united with God:

ਕਬੀਰ ਸੁਰਗ ਨਰਕ ਤੇ ਮੈ ਰਹਿਓ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਕੇ ਪਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਕੀ ਮਉਜ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਉ ਅੰਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਆਦਿ ॥
*'Kabir says," By the grace of the Lord, I have escaped from
the desire of paradise and the fear of death.
Always I live in the memory of the Lord's lotus feet'.*

Gurbani teaches one to die—while being alive !

Gurbani teaches us to live humbly and thus, die while living . We should always remember God, sincerely and not feel proud of our worldly possessions:

ਸਬਦਿ ਮਰੈ ਸੁ ਮੁਆ ਜਾਪੈ ॥
ਕਾਲੁ ਨ ਚਾਪੈ ਦੁਖੁ ਨ ਸੰਤਾਪੈ ॥

'A devotee who dies by Guru's hymns (lives a humble life) is truly dead.

His death does not crush him, and pain does not afflict him.'

ਸਦ ਜੀਵਨੁ ਭਲੇ ਕਹਾਂਹੀ ॥ ਮੂਏ ਬਿਨੁ ਜੀਵਨੁ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

'People say it is good to live forever, but without dying (living humbly), there is no life.'

Submit to God's Will

According to Gurbani death is inevitable and its time is fixed by God. We should not be afraid of death, rather we should lead an honest life, remember God and live a humble life. Death unites holy persons

with God. The soul does not die even if our body is the subject of death. We should not mourn after the death of somebody but submit to God's Will.

ਟਟੈ ਟੰਦੁ ਕਰਹੁ ਕਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਘੜੀ ਕਿ ਮੁਹਤਿ ਕਿ ਉਠਿ ਚਲਣਾ ॥

ਜੂਐ ਜਨਮੁ ਨ ਹਾਰਹੁ ਅਪਣਾ ਭਾਜਿ ਪੜਹੁ ਤੁਮ ਹਰਿ ਸਰਣਾ ॥

'Tatta: Why do you practice hypocrisy, O mortal? In a moment, in an instant, you shall have to get up and depart. Don't lose your life in the gamble - hurry to the Lord's Sanctuary.'

ਨਾਂਗੇ ਆਵਨੁ ਨਾਂਗੇ ਜਾਨਾ ॥ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਰਹਿਰੈ ਰਾਜਾ ਰਾਨਾ ॥

'Naked we come, and naked we go. No one, not even kings and queens, shall remain.'

Sawan Singh Gogia



The author was born at Narpur in Thal District of Sargodha (now Pakistan) on 23 December, 1923 in a middle class Sikh family, his father, S Partap Singh was earlier a cloth merchant, and later a share broker. S Sawan Singh received his early education in Mian Channu and then at Narpur (now both in Pakistan). As he was a brilliant student with proficiency in Persian, he passed Munshi Fazal exam in 1942. For many years, he worked a teacher and it was only after the partition that he did his graduation privately while in service.

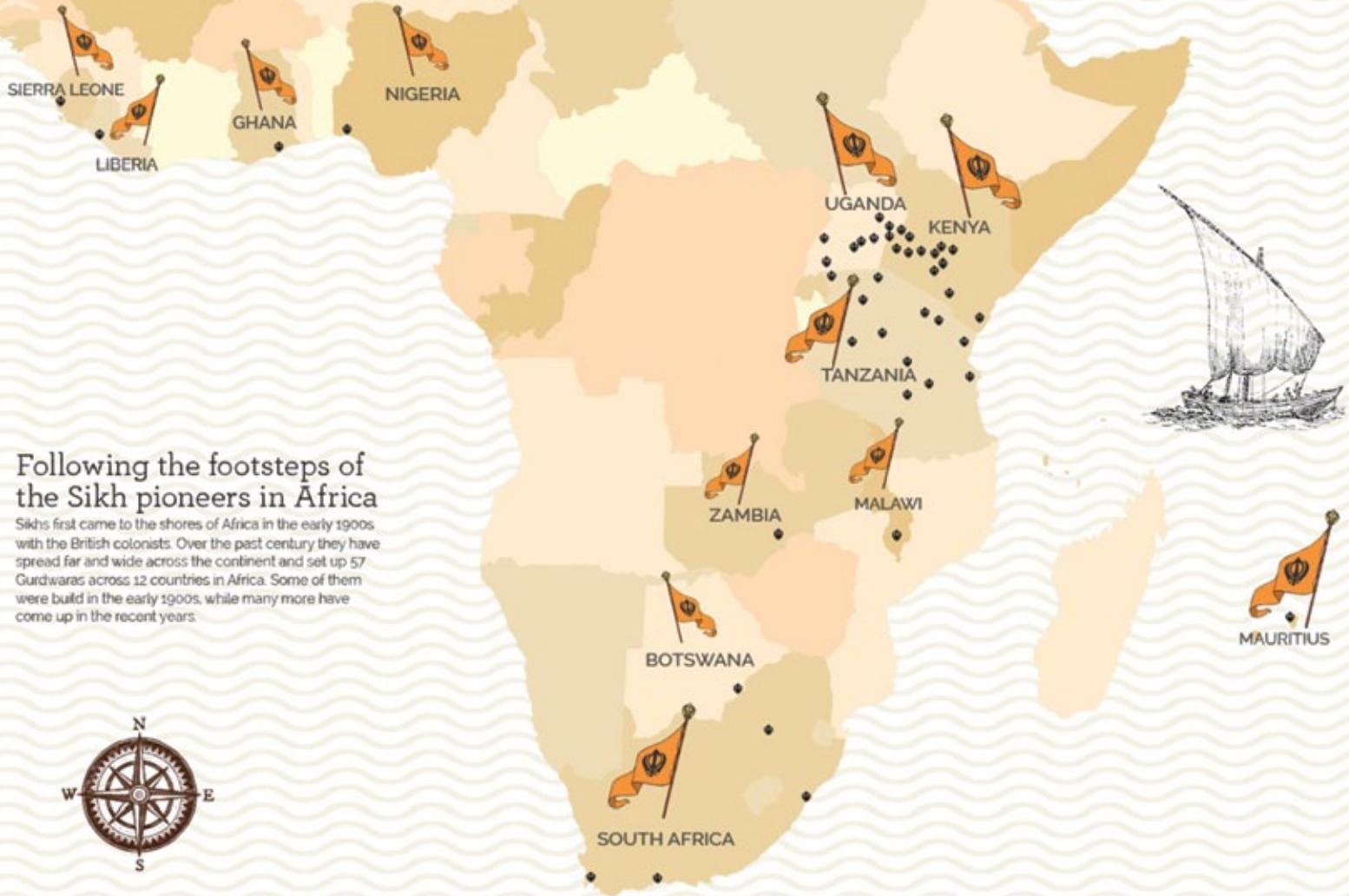
He started his regular teaching career in 1950 at Government Balbir School, Faridkot and while in service completed his Graduation in History and Post Graduation in Punjabi. He got a state award for being one of the best five heads of schools, when serving at Mansa. He became Principal of a Government Primary Teachers Training (JBT) School at Budhlada (Bhatinda) and served there until he was deputed with the Punjab School Education Board, Mohali as officer in charge of the Adarsh Schools. During 1984–87 he served as Honorary Founder Principal of an Elementary Model School started by Gurdwara Sector 15, Chandigarh (Gurdwara Guru Tegh Bahadur), which is now a recognised Higher Secondary School.

After retirement, he moved to the United States, where his three sons and daughter are settled, took on the role of a teacher and a writer on Sikhism. At an advanced age, he learnt operating computers. He has written 12 books and more than 100 articles on Gurbani and Sikh history which can be follow on his website www.sawansinghgogia.com.

Sawan Singh Ji is now 97 years of age and remains a role-model, playing his role of a mentor and a writer with dedication and spirit, having complete faith in the Guru.

He lives in Santa Ana, California, USA.

Sikhs and their Gurdwaras in Africa



Following the footsteps of the Sikh pioneers in Africa

Sikhs first came to the shores of Africa in the early 1900s with the British colonists. Over the past century they have spread far and wide across the continent and set up 57 Gurdwaras across 12 countries in Africa. Some of them were built in the early 1900s, while many more have come up in the recent years.

(From the book by Bhupinder Pal Singh Walia)

There are Sikhs in virtually every country in every continent of the globe today. The *Nishaan* has researched and written on the community and their Gurdwaras, mostly in the English-speaking world, from Australia to British Columbia, from London to San Francisco, from Singapore to Scotland ... and the journey has just begun !

The Continent of Africa also looms large in this context and *Nishaan* is privileged to begin a series on Sikhs (and their Gurdwaras) in Africa, essentially based on Bhupinder Pal Singh Walia's truly magnificent book *Gurdwaras of Africa* which is a handsome compilation,

and magnificently illustrated by this award-winning industrial photographer who continues to document subjects related to Sikhism, travel, wildlife and heritage and culture. His photography work has taken him on travels around the world, covering six continents and 41 countries. His work has been published in 17 books so far.

This then is the first part of many reviews to come on the Sikhs of Africa from the pioneers who arrived in East Africa and since the mid-19th Century have settled in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Zambia.

The Foreword, written by Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh of the *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha*, begins with a brief overview of the Sikh *Dharam* followed by significance of Gurdwaras. The late Patwant Singh is quoted: “*The Gurdwara emerged as a new edifice on India’s religious landscape in the 17th century. Ever since, this indestructible symbol of Sikh faith has stirred intense and indefinable feelings in millions of Sikhs everywhere. These feelings range from a yearning for comforting peace of its sacred precincts and the ever-abiding fragrance of marigolds, rose petals to a longing to hear recitations from the Guru Granth Sahib and the shabads rendered in the robust and resonant voices of the Ragis. There is also the urge to savour the karah parsad once again – the sacramental food blessed by the Guru and given to all who visit a Gurdwara. Each of these experiences are so elevating as to bring tears to many eyes. Gurdwaras are a powerful symbol which represent Sikh Dharam’s pride and faith and its most cherished beliefs*”.

Today, there are 57 Gurdwaras spread across 12 countries of Africa, the largest number being in Kenya.

The following is extracted from the book *Gurdwaras of Africa* by Bhupinder Pal Singh Walia.

The Sikhs of Kenya



It is recorded that the first Sikhs arrived at the shores of Kenya in the late 19th century, employed by British colonists for construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway line. This railway is considered as critical to the settlement of the Indian East African community, as well recorded in history of the region.

This historic colonial railway line is seen as the starting point of Indian settlers on the Continent, its construction, which began on 5 August 1896 at the port of Mombasa was completed in December 1901 at Kisumu town (known as Port Florence at the time), and being 584 miles long.

Over 30,000 workers and officer level staff were brought to Africa from the Indian sub-continent by the British for this mammoth task. After completion of the railway line, most of them returned home but around 6,000 stayed back, becoming backbone of the Indian community in East Africa.

The contributions of this community, mostly Sikhs, is acknowledged as having been crucial to Kenya’s economic, social and cultural development. So much so that in 2017, the Government of Kenya declared that the descendants of those pioneering Indians are the 44th tribe in the country! Fred Matiang, Kenya’s acting Minister of interior in 2017, made the announcement 21 July on behalf of Kenya’s President. At the time it was said “all mankind is said to have originated in Africa/Kenya and thus the declaration of those of Indian descent as a tribe of Kenya is just a welcome back.”!

At present, Asians account for over 1 per cent of the Kenyan population, of which the Sikhs constitute a substantial proportion of them.

As a country and as a people, Kenya has been kind to the Sikhs. And the Sikhs in turn, have played an important role in the history and development of the country with their skills, enterprise and investments. From originally hunting down of man-eating tigers in the jungles of Tsavo in the 1890s to playing a critical role in the freedom struggle of Kenya from its British colonists in the 1950s to holding important posts in the local government bodies of the fledgling nation in the 1960s and 1970s, the Sikhs of Kenya have been in the forefront.

Kenya attracted numerous South Asians in the 1970s, especially Sikhs in search of business

opportunities. It also became a safe haven for those fleeing Uganda following the violence and Government's declaration of *Africanisation* in the 1960s. Kenya continues to be the base for a majority of South Asian businesses, including those of the Sikh community, which are spread across Africa.

Descendants of the Railwaymen



(<http://www.sikh-heritage.co.uk/>)

The descendants of the first Sikh railway handymen and engineers who came with the British, have since become the driving force behind Kenya's construction and infrastructure development community. The manner in which the Sikhs increased their usefulness to Kenya is a saga of resource, initiative and perseverance.

From the early 1900s, many Sikhs came to East Africa in search of work. In the early years, many worked for the railway department, the biggest employer, while others were employed by the Government Public Works Department and by the many European farmers who had settled here. They undertook work that required skill and industry, which the indigenous population was yet to be exposed to. Some became successful farmers while others took up trades in sync with the growing needs of Kenya at the time by improving and diversifying their capabilities. They became contractors, construction supervisors, engineers and even furniture makers.

The first formal Indian settlement in Kenya was established in 1905 at Kibos in Kisumu county. Located in Nyanza province of Kenya, there are many heartwarming tales of how the Sikh community helped each other and developed the newly established towns set up by the British colonists.

This is also a region of many 'firsts'. One such story that is most quoted and fondly remembered is that of Sardar Jagat Singh, who came to Africa in 1895 as a head clerk in the railways survey department. He was allotted 105 acres of land near Kibos village in Kisumu county in 1902, a year after the completion of the railway line. He is said to be one of the first Indians to begin sugarcane farming in the region and also the first to manufacture jaggery in 1930.

The towns that started out as small outposts along the 584 mile long railway line, from Mombasa to Kisumu remain standing today. Most of them are home to at least one, if not, more Gurdwaras, reminiscent of the thriving Sikh population in the area. While some towns have lost economic or political relevance in modern Kenya, many have become bustling trading hubs like Kisumu, which is the third largest city in Kenya and the heart of Kenya sugar industry.

The community spirit and strength of the pioneering Sikhs is evident in each town and in the history of each Gurdwara. For example, there are tales of the manner in which the Sikhs of Nakuru helped their less fortunate brothers survive the great economic depression in the 1930s which hit the European settlers in the region because of which a number of Sikhs working on farms owned by these settlers lost their jobs in quick succession. For these Sikhs, the then recently constructed Nakuru Gurdwara rest house became a double boon: it provided shelter and also access to other wealthier Sikhs who helped them with new employment.

Those who were unable to return to India on their own were provided jobs on rotational basis to help them financially. Men would be employed for a month and then make way for another lot and so on. The idea caught on and employers followed the example and allowed many of those who had lost their jobs through no fault of their own, to earn their living.

Sikhs have also played an important role in the police force of Kenya, especially since it was the British who set up the force in 1888. Despite the British colonists' glass ceiling, where Asians or Africans in the police service could not rise above the post of inspectors till 1948, Sikh officers in the police force were greater than any other Asian or African community.

There were 5 Asian chief Inspectors, 34 inspectors and assistant inspectors while there were 154 European officers in the police force in the early 1900s. The first Sikh in the Kenyan Police force was Sardar Kapur Singh, who was brought from Punjab by the colonial officers to Kenya in 1895. And the most high ranking official in the Kenyan police force till 2014, was Sardar Joginder Singh Sokhi, who joined as a constable in 1953 and retired as the Assistant Commissioner (Crime) in 1984.

Sikhs in the service of Kenya



Colonel Gurcharan Singh Chana (on the left) was Commander of the Kenya Air Force base at Eastleigh, the largest and main Air Force Base and Air Force Headquarters in Kenya. His story in East Africa and contributions as a Sikh to the nation is prominent. Here he is seen escorting Kenya President Jomo Kenyatta at Eastleigh Airport.

Image from <http://www.sikh-heritage.co.uk/heritage/sikhhert%20EAfrica/sikhsEAfricapart5.htm>

It is only post 1970s that the role of Sikhs in the administrative and government jobs reduced as the newly independent Kenyan administration started an *Africanisation* process. However, their role as entrepreneurs continues even today.

It is believed there are between 50,000 to 100,000 Sikhs living in East Africa today, spread largely across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Among all the countries with a substantial Sikh population, Kenya has the largest number of Sikhs and Gurdwaras.

22 Gurdwaras of Kenya

There are 22 Gurdwaras spread across the length and breadth of Kenya. Many of these started in railway sheds like the *Gurdwara Ramgarhia Railway Landies* in Nairobi or in someone's home like the *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara* at Kericho. In Kenya, the capital Nairobi has the largest concentration of Gurdwaras, eight in number.

Though many towns where these Gurdwaras were originally set up no longer have a large Sikh population, the Gurdwaras are maintained and kept functional with help from other towns and cities where Sikh communities continue to flourish. For instance, in Meru city near Mount Kenya, there is just one Sikh family. But the Gurdwara here continues to thrive.

Unfortunately, the largest divide along caste lines in the Gurdwaras is also visible in Kenya, more than any other African country. A majority of the cities with large Sikh population have at least two Gurdwaras: a Singh Sabha and a Ramgarhia one. However, in most cases, the Sikhs of both communities visit both Gurdwaras and the weekly divans and other celebrations are scheduled in a way that members from both Gurdwaras can attend both the services.

The seeds for the *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha* (GNNSJ) were also sown in Kenya, as Sant Baba Puran Singh (Kericho Waite), the earliest promoter of this school of Sikhism lived a large part of his life here in Kenya. It is only a decade or so before his death that he moved to the United Kingdom. Following his teachings, successive leaders of the Jatha have played an important role in reviving and maintaining the Sikh way of life in Kenya as well as across Africa.

From the recovery and installation of Guru Granth Sahib of the Gurdwara at Makindu to

celebrating important Sikh milestones like the 350th year birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, the Jatha continues to support Sikhism in Africa. GNNSJ is a charitable socio-religious organisation based in Birmingham in England. Aimed at promoting 'selfless service': *Nishkam Sewa*, the organisation works towards uniting Sikhs across the world and spreading the core messages of Sikhism.

Gurdwaras at Eldoret

Foundation of the Gurdwara Ramgarhia Sabha at Eldoret was laid in 1932 and this was completed two years later. Housed in a quaint bungalow-like building, the Gurdwara occupied a small piece of land acquired from the British administration of the time. This was subsequently brought over by the community through the funds they collected via donations. Today, the Gurdwara compound is over double the original plot size and includes the main *darbar sahib*, a large multi-purpose hall, kitchen and even a commercial

building. The commercial building houses shops and residential apartments, which help generate revenue for upkeep of the Gurdwara and house some of the less fortunate members of the Sikh community living in Eldoret.

The Gurdwara Sahib is located in the central business district of Eldoret on Temple Road. It is adjacent to other Asian places of worship like the Sanatham Dharam Mandir Jamia Mosque and the Jain temple. This Gurdwara's architecture style has used a lot of the natural light features, making the *darbar* hall well lit and airy. This unique aspect of the building is credited to the pioneering Sikhs of this town, who constructed the Gurdwara, offering their services and skills free of cost.

The *darbar* hall is surrounded by high *roshan-dans* (old style ventilators) along the walls and a large skylight over the *palki sahib*. A single storey structure with tin-sheet slopping roof, the *darbar* sahib also features a dome. The structure has been built so that



Sri Gurdwara Ramgarhia Sabha at Eldoret

bright sunlight streams through into the *darbar* hall lighting the *palki sahib*. The stark white interiors are provided relief by the delicate stained glass window and door panels.

Around 80 Sikh families are attached to this Gurdwara, where the weekly *diwans* are held on Saturday evenings followed by *Guru ka langar*, while every Friday the ladies of the Sikh community meet at the Gurdwara for *kirtan*.

Gurdwaras at Kericho

This town in Kenya is renowned for its good weather and best known for estates in the region. Kericho is located at nearly 8,000 feet above sea level and because of its fertile soil and temperate climate is a favoured tea cultivation country west of the Kenyan Rift Valley. As per 2009 census there are close to 7.5 lakh people living in Kericho, a county spread across over 2,000 square kilometres.

This grand Gurdwara dominates the Kericho skyline and its use of traditional Gurdwara domes above the multi-storey building stand out in an otherwise flat landscape. From within the Gurdwara one can see Kericho town and the adjoining tea estates for miles all around.

The Gurdwara stands testament to the spirit of incorporating heritage with modernity. The original Gurdwara was inside Sant Baba Puran Singh's (*Kericho Walle*) house. And the present Gurdwara building, built in 2000, incorporates Sant Baba Puran Singh's original house as well as the wagon works garage as part of its main structure. It is as much a spiritual site as it is a museum to Sant Baba Puran Singh. The original furniture, furnishings and setting of his house are kept as they were when he lived here.

Sant Baba Puran Singh was one of the most influential members of the Sikh community in Kenya and in later years, in the United Kingdom. He was





the founder of *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha* (GNNSJ). Sant Baba Puran Singh (Kericho Walle) was a Gur Sikh from Gura village in Jalandhar district of Punjab, and gained saintly status over the years owing to his way of life, his insight, teachings and impact on others around him.

A striking painting of Guru Nanak Dev in blue robes adorns one of the walls in the living room. It is said that Guru Nanak Dev wore blue robes for his fourth journey (*udassi*), when he visited Mecca. Sant Baba Puran Singh's mechanical workshop (Kericho Wagon works) started in 1927 is kept open even today, though is no longer operational.

Sant Baba Puran Singh (*Kericho Walle*) moved to Kenya around 1919 but later emigrated to the United Kingdom in the 1970s, where he breathed his last in 1983.



Aerial view of the Kericho Gurdwara Sahib

He is credited with establishing the *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha* (GNNSJ). And over the years GNNSJ's subsequent head, like Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh have expanded the original Gurdwara. The land around the original Gurdwara plot has been purchased and developed to house the Africa headquarters of GNNSJ and a vocational training institute has been set up for the local population.

The new *darbar sahibs* are characterised by their geometrical designs. The one located on the first floor is has a red, gold and white theme, where the geometric designs add a decorative touch to an otherwise sombre interior of this *darbar* hall. The *Darbar Sahib* on the second floor is decorated with geometrical patterns of grey, blue, silver and glass on a white background. Though all three *Darbar* halls have *prakash*, the most used prayer hall is the original *Darbar Sahib* in Sant Baba Puran Singh's house on the ground floor.

The Gurdwara is surrounded by beautiful lawns and is quite removed from the surrounding main road of the Kericho commercial centre.

Although there are barely ten or so Sikh families now resident in Kericho, the Gurdwara is well maintained and witnesses large number of devotees

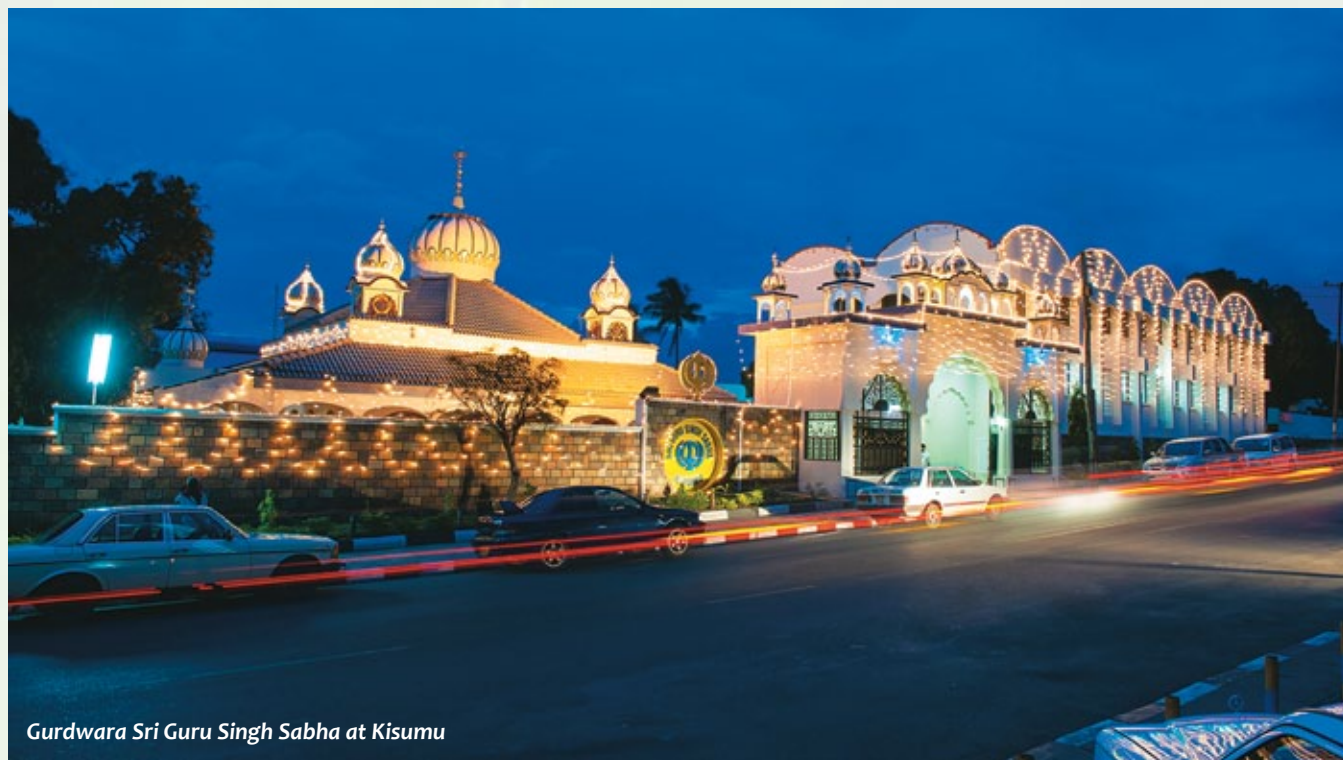
because its historical value and a number of special functions held here every year. It is among the few Gurdwaras in Africa which offers *langar* to every visitor on any day and at any time.

The other Gurdwara (Ramgarhia Sabha) at Kericho transports one to an era gone by. Built in the traditional East African architectural style, the single storey building has retained its original African flavours with sloping tin-shed roofs, covered walkway all around the main *Darbar Sahib* and manicured lawns.

Sant Baba Puran Singh (*Kericho Walle*) was instrumental in setting up this Gurdwara, rallying the Sikh community to get it built. The Kericho Sikh *sangat* decided in the early 1930s that they be needed separate space from the one they already had at Sant Baba Puran Singh's house because of the community's growing numbers. The *sangat* began collecting money and permissions to build the Gurdwara the same year but it took almost five to seven years for them to complete all the financial and logistical requirements.

Gurdwaras at Kisumu

Kisumu, the third largest city in Kenya, continues to host a sizeable Sikh population. The *sangat* of the Gurdwara has some 250-300 people during important



Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha at Kisumu

Sikh festivals including *Vaisakhi*. As the city is a trading hub, most Sikhs living in the region run their own businesses including sugar mills, engineering workshops, transport companies, building material factories and construction firms.

The British-sponsored Kenya-Uganda railway line reached Kisumu in 1901. Ever since the town has been important to Sikhs in East Africa. Located at one corner of Lake Victoria, Kisumu was called Port Florence till Kenya's independence in the 1960s. It is said that till 1912 the Sikh community in this region would meet at the Kisumu Railway colony for weekly prayers. In December 1912, the community vowed to build a new and permanent Gurdwara, as per the old records.

As in the case of other Gurdwaras in East Africa, Kisumu Singh Sabha is testament to the community spirit and strength. "It wasn't built by rich people. It was built by simple, hardworking pioneers," says Rupri Mangat, a descendent of one of the first few families of Kisumu.

Beginning in January 1913, the Sikhs of the area began fundraising campaigns and by December had laid foundation stone for the Gurdwara, where it is today. Sikhs contributed large sums of money and went to the extent of giving up an entire month's salary to build this Gurdwara.

It took a while for the completion of this Gurdwara as per the Book of Minutes dated 19 November 1910-1916. It was in February, 1916 a letter from the founding Chairman of *Kisumu Singh Sabha* president (Didar Singh) was sent to the Chief Khalsa Diwan at Amritsar, India requesting a "good" granthi for the Gurdwara. And it was officially inaugurated on *Vaisakhi* in April 1917.

The Gurdwaras at Kisumu hold a place of great pride and honour among the Sikhs of this town, and are very good examples of the manner and process of development of Sikh communities in Africa, which began humbly and have gone on to flourish both economically and culturally. All narratives around the Gurdwaras are testimony to the hard work and sacrifices of the pioneering Sikhs.

Guru Nanak Darbar is considered as the second Gurdwara in Kisumu, initially being part of the first Kisumu Gurdwara, Guru Singh Sabha. They

separated from Kisumu Singh Sabha because some members of the community felt that the Sikh festivals like *Gurpurabs*, *Lohri* and *Vaisakhi* needed to be celebrated on the very same day as they were in India.

Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara was first set up within the railway colony at Kisumu in the early 1920s and remained there till 1946. Its humble beginnings are recorded in old documents of the very first Gurdwara committees. A case in point would be the incident of purchasing mosquito nets over the *Palki Sahib* because the region was infested with mosquitoes! The community felt the need to protect not just themselves from mosquitoes and other insects but also the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the Gurdwara as well as the *Giani ji*.

Nothing of the first Gurdwara structure remains except a lone concrete platform built for the *Nishaan Sahib* amidst the old tin shed houses of the railway colony next the the abandoned railway line. As of 2009, few Sikhs remain in the area and the railway colony is now home to underprivileged of the city.

In 1949 the foundation stone for a new *Guru Nanak Darbar* was laid at the Accra Street, and this Gurdwara opened in 1954. The Gurdwara building is part of a commercial complex and remains standing to this day. A number of engineering workshops and hardware stores are operational in this area many of which were once owned by Sikhs and other Asians.



Teaching of Kirtan and Gurumukhi to the children of Kisumu



Langar at Kisumu Gurdwara

By the late 1990s the *sangat* was too large to be accommodated in this budding and thus new land was acquired to build another Gurdwara. In 2000, the plans were laid out for *Guru Nanak Darbar*, the building was made fully functional in 2010. The large complex includes a *langar* hall and kitchen on the ground floor and the main domed *darbar sahib* on the first floor. There is large parking space, lush green lawns as well as four residential apartments for the Gurdwara staff including the *Giani ji*. It was designed by Pritpal Singh Sandhu, an architect of Kisumu.

The *Darbar Sahib* has 11 doors and features beautiful stained glass windows. A majority of the craftsmanship for this Gurdwara was done as *sewa* by carpenters in Kisumu as well as India.

Although located in the town centre, the Gurdwara has a quaint aura removed from the hustle-bustle of daily lives. There are cement platforms built around the old fruit trees, planted by pioneering Sikhs for people to sit on, much like the traditional village squares back home in India.

The compound houses the main *Darbar Sahib*, the *langar* hall as well as a school that teaches children *kirtan* and *gurmukhi*. This is not a regular school and only focuses on the teachings of Sikhism. The Gurdwara also runs a charitable dispensary nearby which is open to all and offers subsidised medical care to the needy.

The weekly *darbar* is held on Sunday mornings, with *Guru ka langar* served thereafter.

Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Mombasa

Built in 1937, the Gurdwara was founded by the first Sikh immigrants at the port of Mombasa in early part of the 19th century. Mombasa is the second-largest city in Kenya, with a population of about 1.2 million and there are about 500 members of the Sikh community, resident here.



Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Jatha at Mombasa



Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara at Mombasa

A regional cultural and economic hub, Mombasa hosts a large sea port, an international airport and is an important tourism centre. Since it is on the shores of the Indian Ocean, Mombasa has been an important trading centre for many centuries.

In the book 'Through Open Doors', Cynthia Salvadori, writes about the Sikh settlements in Africa. She says the oldest Sikh Association in Kenya is the Sri Guru Singh Sabha... founded in India in 1873 to revitalise the Khalsa movement. The Sikh organisers came out with the first indentured labourers in 1898 and together with their colleagues in the Police and Army, were responsible for the construction of the first Gurdwaras, not only in Mombasa but also in several other towns. They were also responsible for the organisation of the main Sikh educational system in Kenya, which are the Khalsa Schools.

The first Sikh Gurdwara Sahib in Africa was opened in Kilindini (Mombasa) literally within a few

weeks of the arrival of the first shipload of indentured labourers in 1898, which is likely to have been a temporary structure in a railway-shed. Descendants of the pioneering Sikhs of East Africa believe that this is the foundation of many later and existing Gurdwaras in both Kenya and Uganda.

Sri Guru Singh Sabha at Mombasa comprises a large *darbar* hall with three *palki sahibs* placed within. There is a striking blue mosaic wall behind the *paliki sahib* with paintings of Guru Nanak on it. The exterior of the Gurdwara is a commercial looking modern two storey building save for the large *khandas* and the *Nishaan Sahib*. The outside wall has *khandas* painted all around and detailed cement mould creeper type work above the main entrance to the *Darbar Sahib*.

Community services of this Gurdwara include a day nursery school. Guru Nanak Primary School, and Guru Nanak Clinic. There is also accommodation for visitors to the city.

Gurdwara at Nakuru



Nishaan Sahib at Nakuru

Nakuru was an important and bustling town of the Kenyan Rift valley during the colonial times and as a result had a large Sikh population from the early 1900s. Kenyan authorities were quick to recognise this, and when the local Sikh community put in a request for allotting some space to them, it was soon granted. As far back as 1903, the railway authorities allotted a plot of land north of the Nakuru Railway marshalling yards for the construction of a Gurdwara.

As the community grew, the need for larger plot was recognised. In 1925, Sardar Sunder Singh was deputed to be the Sikh community's spokesman to the administrative authorities for negotiating clearances and approval for a larger plot of land. Sunder Singh was an overseer at a local European estate and had a large number of Sikh artisans working under him. He spoke English well, fairly uncommon in those days,

and as a result became an ideal candidate to present the community's case to the authorities.

A plot, where today's Gurdwara stands, was quickly allocated. The community wasted little time and in about three months between 1926 and 1927 a fully functional Gurdwara building was completed. The Gurdwara was built with timber framework, clad with corrugated sheets and lined with tongue-and-groove timber and with verandahs on the north, south and west sides.

As the region developed agriculturally and commercially membership of the Gurdwara expanded and the plot was developed and expanded to include an orchard of lemons, guavas, paw-paws (papaya), peaches and pomegranates. These became popular with the general public, especially the school children.

With a growing *sangat* and popularity, the community decided to provide overnight accommodation for which a rest house was then built, with many rooms, a kitchen and bathrooms. Sardar Kishen Singh, the railway shed master in Nakuru, devoted a great deal of time and hard work to this development. In later years the accommodation became popular with foreign backpacking tourists as well.

Unfortunately, in 1936 the Gurdwara was gutted by an accidental fire and reduced to ashes. Promptly the community set up a temporary Gurdwara in the rest house and soon work was underway to rebuild the structure. Plans for a new shrine were drawn up by Sardar Ganga Singh, a civil engineer with the railway at the time and these formed the basis of the Gurdwara as today. The local Sikh Community through *sewa* completed the building in a record time of five months. Many individuals are credited with contributing to this building pro-bono. A few notable names include Sardar Ganga Singh, who donated 500 Kenyan Shillings (a big amount in those days) towards rebuilding of the Gurdwara and Inder Singh who designed the entrance door, which was crafted by Kartar Singh Mahal.

An important feature is the *Nishaan Sahib* placed on a 60 foot (18 metre) high pole, constructed of tapering sheet steel cylinders. It was pieced together with rivets on site, with purpose-made jigs, being a magnificent example of craftsmanship of the

pioneering Sikhs. In 2006, a new *Nishaan Sahib* was installed in the parking lot of the Gurdwara. This is surrounded by a fountain and is designed to be brought down mechanically parallel to the ground so the *sangat* can partake in *sewa*. The *Nishaan Sahib* is also illuminated with orange lights at night and is visible from many parts of Nakuru town.

The Gurdwara also has a hockey ground which is rented out (often for free) to youngsters interested in playing the game.

Gurdwaras at Nairobi

In 1903, the Landies Gurdwara became the very first Gurdwara to be set up in Kenya and the Sikhs in Kenya believe that is from here that the Sikh faith spread across East Africa. The Gurdwara was built in vicinity of the main railway station of Nairobi by the pioneering Sikhs who had worked on the East African railway line. It was located within the old railway colony, which was occupied mostly by Asians of the time.

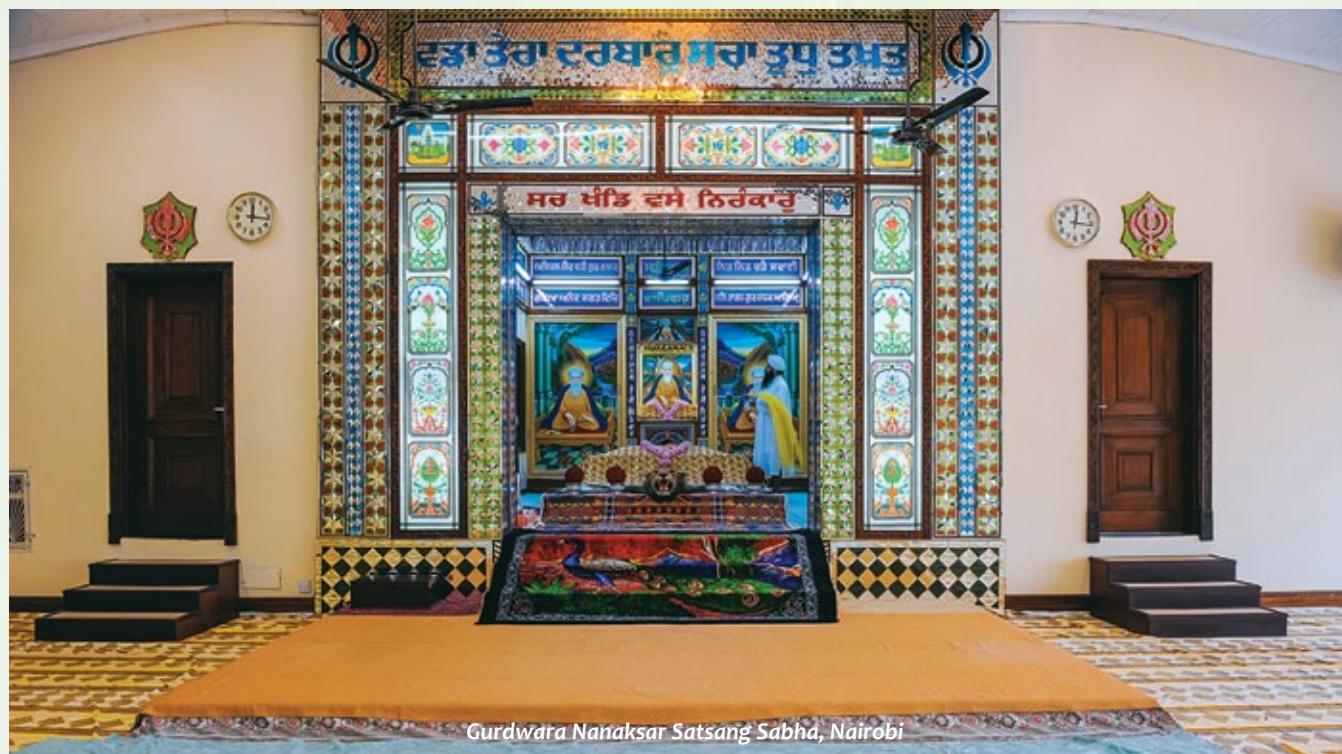
Unfortunately, these days, the area is largely deserted or has been given over as housing for poorer sections of Kenyans living in Nairobi. It is not considered the safest locality and as a result the

Gurdwara has many security features including electric fencing.

To counter any threats, the Gurdwara *sangat* have been working to create trust amongst the local community and provide *langar* to poor children in the area every Sunday. The *sadh sangat* is also developing the area infrastructure and offer medical assistance to the needy locals.

The main entrance to the Gurdwara is through a beautifully detailed carved wooden door, added in later years. The main Gurdwara structure is maintained as it was first built, with tin sheets and wood panelling. The *Darbar* hall has not been changed, but within the compound some extensions have been added for office and residential space. The compound includes the partially covered *langar* hall, which is furnished with long benches for sitting.

When the Gurdwara Sahib was first built, the entire area around occupied by Sikh railway workers and their families. As times changed the Sikhs moved to other parts of the growing city but the Gurdwara Sahib remained. Sometime in the 1950s, as the Sikh community grew in numbers, the Gurdwara's location and space prompted the community to build a new Gurdwara, so over the years Landies Gurdwara became less frequented.



Gurdwara Nanaksar Satsang Sabha, Nairobi

In 2002-2003 Landies Gurdwara came under threat from the local government authorities, who felt that because the space was not being used the Gurdwara should be shut down. The railway commission asked Sikhs to either use the Gurdwara more frequently or close it down so they could develop the land for other purposes.

The Landies Gurdwara community, thereafter planned 101 *Akhand Paaths* to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Gurdwara Sahib, and since then *Akhand Paaths* are being held non-stop here. After completion of the first 101 *Akhand Paaths* held at the Landies Gurdwara, various individuals from the Sikh community spread across Africa have ensured that there are continuous *Akhand Paaths* and *langar* is taking place at this Gurdwara.

The revival and continuous support for this Gurdwara, in a city with six other old and large established Gurdwaras, is the essence of the Sikh unity and commitment to their heritage. In 2014 the government of Kenya gave the title of Kenyan heritage site to the Landies Gurdwara.

Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha was built around 1926, the domed Gurdwara located in a congested

part of old city of Nairobi but retaining its old world charm. It is said that the foundation stone of this Gurdwara was laid by Sardar Kishen Singh in 1909 and construction took over a year to be completed. The opening ceremony was performed by Sardar Bishen Singh in 1911, at which there were some hundred Sikhs living in Nairobi.

However, as the city grew so did the Sikh *sangat* and the community began planning for the construction of a larger Gurdwara. In September 1956, a deputation approached the British colonial government for grant of land at Byramjee Street, later renamed as Uyoma Street.

The foundation stone for the present Gurdwara was laid on 16 January 1959 by Sardar Mohan Singh, Sardar Santokh Singh Mehta, Sardar Kartar Singh, Sardar Jaswant Singh and Sardar Labh Singh.

The construction took five years and was no easy sailing for the community, being completed in 1963 and officially opened by Sardar Inder Singh Gill in November 1963, just a month before Kenya gained its independence from the British, on 12 December 1963.

Architecturally, it is one of the most unique and stunning Gurdwaras of the region, the onion shaped



Four palki Sahibs at the Darbar hall
Gurdwara Railway Landies, Nairobi



Under the onion dome that dominates the Gurdwara at Nairobi, is the main darbar hall on a mezzanine structure above the palki sahib

dome covered with tiles and most eye-catching. The dome was also designed to reduce echo and the advice of the structural engineers was used for inbuilt safety features. Since 1982 further improvements have been carried out on the building to enhance the facilities at this Gurdwara. The tiling of the domes was done under the supervision of Sardar Tarlochan Singh Sagoo, the terrazzo paving of the court yard laid by Sardar Phuman Singh Sahota. Apart from improving aesthetic look of the complex, the domes have been rendered waterproof and the flooring made comfortable for the *Sadh Sangat*.

While interiors of the Gurdwara are beautifully decorated, they remain simple and appealing. The onion dome adds a grandiose touch to the otherwise simplistic Gurdwara, both inside and outside. The dome has glass tiles that provide light into the *Darbar Sahib*, the *Sukh Asan* space is right above the *Palki Sahib*, designed like a wooden cabin or a tree house.

The other Gurdwara, Nanaksar Satsang Sabha at Nairobi is located in one of the quieter residential parts of the city, this Gurdwara being among the newer ones to have been built in the Kenyan capital. The foundation stone for this Gurdwara was laid in August 1989.

This single storey structure is built in traditional African architectural style on the outside with slopping tin roofs. The main *darbar* hall is large but simplistic, in keeping with the Nanaksar philosophy of selfless

devotion to God and the living divinity Guru Granth Sahib. Within the *Darbar Sahib* there is a special alcove built for Guru Granth Sahib. This alcove is in stark contrast to the rest of the Gurdwara and is decorated with dramatic mirror-work. It is beautifully detailed and features couplets from the Guru Granth Sahib, on greatness of the Almighty Lord.

The author and photographer

Bhupinder Pal Singh Walia is considered one of India's most awarded industrial photographers. Born in 1967, he began photography at an early age of 17 years and after over a decade of photography covering different sectors including fashion and lifestyle, he moved to industrial photography as his focus in 1996 and in addition, documents subjects related to Sikhism, travel, wildlife, heritage and culture. His profession has taken him on travel around the world, covering six continents and 41 countries.



Gurdwaras of Africa is Bhupinder Pal Singh Walia's maiden book which takes readers on a visual journey across the African continent, focused on the Sikh community and their Gurdwaras. He begins chronicling his journey from Kenya, where he had gone to photograph an industrial set-up. Starting with Eldoret in Kenya, he goes all the way to Zambia and writes a visually striking account of the Gurdwaras that he visits.

All images by Bhupinder Pal Singh Walia.

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From the Archives

Sikh Pioneers of the East African Railways



Construction of the 582 mile-long Uganda Railway commenced on 5 August 1896 by the British East Africa Company. The skilled and unskilled labour in those days could not be better sourced from anywhere other than from British India, by which time the Indian Railways system in many parts of that country was well established by the East India Company. The Railway line reached Kisumu (initially named Port Florence) on Lake Victoria on 19 December 1901. Florence was wife of the engineer Preston and she had the honour of hammering in the last fish plate of the railway track

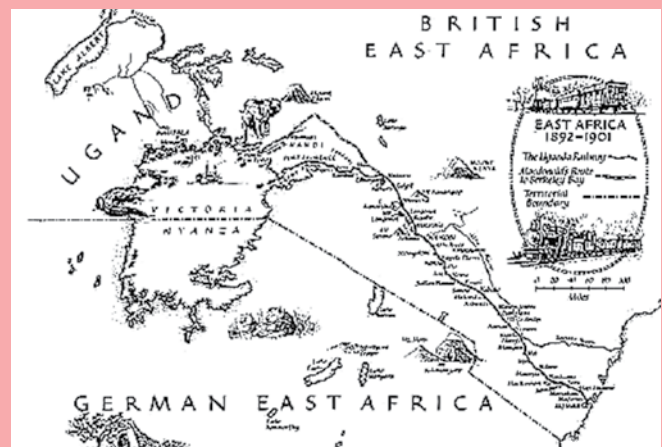
Amongst the work force were many Indians from the Punjab, considered as an ideal community

to face the harsh climate and wild conditions of East Africa. Most of them were Sikhs for whom it has been customary, when undertaking major efforts including going to war, to carry with them their religious Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib and regularly say their prayers as they advanced.

Sikh involvement in building the East African Railway System was no exception. The officials recognised such strength of the Sikh work force, and happily facilitated their religious practice, recognising that it could only be good for morale of the Sikhs and the country of their adoption !

The special railway locomotive in the painting, bearing the Kenya National and the Sikh emblem flags, was for the journey from Kisumu to Makindu. The *Holy Train* stopped at Nakuru, Nairobi and finally steamed to Makindu. Various ceremonies were performed en-route at each stop, with *langar* served to those coming to witness the event.

Guru Granth Sahib was installed in a new building at Makindu, a well publicised event in Kenya, the Sikhs of which country continue to live harmoniously, happily and participating in all aspects of the country's economy and development.



Sher-e-Shamsheer: Guru Tegh Bahadur

A 360 degree project (2020-22)



AtelierStudioNewDelhi
AtelierTheatreC
AtelierTheatreC
DigiAtelier



Sher-E-Shamsheer

2021 marks the 400th birth anniversary of the epitome of social justice, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-2021). Sher-e-Shamsheer is a 360 degree project conceptualised to reach out to larger cross section of audiences through diverse array of work ranging from a daastan performance; creating an online/digital travelling experiences (on historical places related to Guru Tegh Bahadur); digital recording of Guru's baani; publishing a coffee table book & making a documentary film; and organising an international seminar. Using scholarship and creativity, the intention is to create and curate the project in a manner it truly elevates the great glory of the venerable Sikh values and tradition.

Daastan-E-Tegh Bahadur

A musical daastan in Hindustani
by Kuljeet Singh & Atelier Theatre

In The Footsteps of the Guru

Virtual Museum & Documentary film

International Seminar
Guru Tegh Bahadur & the
Ideals of Social Justice

Baani

Creative Recording of Guru's Baani

Bahadur-E-Tegh

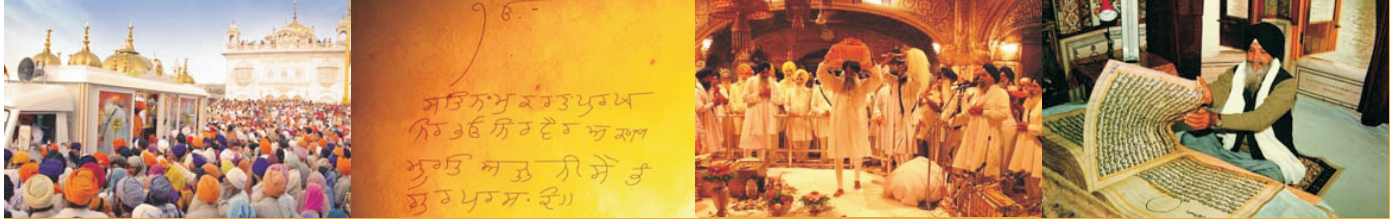
Guru Tegh Bahadur: Life & Times
Illustrated Book

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GURU TEGH BAHADUR
(1621-2021)

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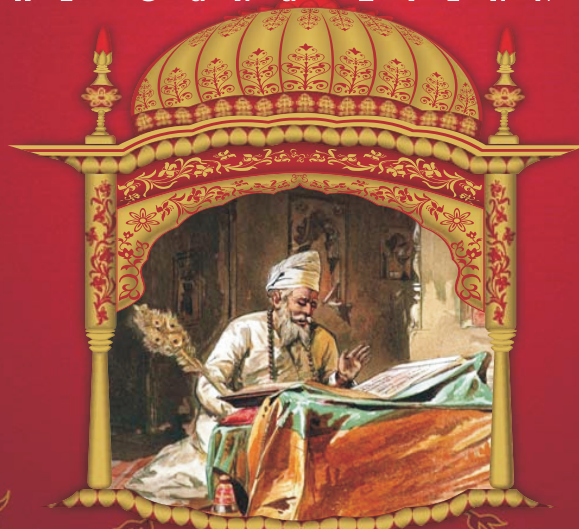


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The Book is the Abode of God.

Guru Granth Sahib

THE GURU ETERNAL



With Message from Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India
Dr. Mohinder Singh

Marking the tercentenary of the Gurgaddi Divas of Guru Granth Sahib in 2008, this volume was brought out to highlight distinctive features of the Sikh scripture.

This book features the history of the compilation of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Pictures of various Gurdwaras and ceremonies covered by India's leading photographers.

A photo montage on the morning and evening ceremony of the *Granth* at Harimandir Sahib.

A look at the world's smallest and biggest *Guru Granth Sahib*.

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Paintings contributed by the most renowned artists and other collections from around the world.

The first ever camera photograph of the Golden Temple by William Baker.

Glimpses of rare *Guru Granth Sahib Birs* from different repositories in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and U.K.

Pictures of *Mool Mantra* in the hand of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh in different rare *Birs*, *Hukamnamas* and relics of the Sikh Gurus.

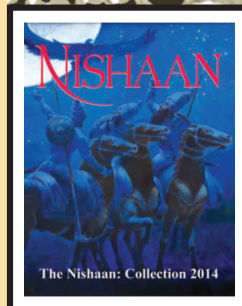
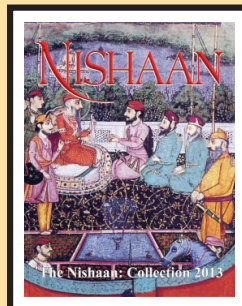
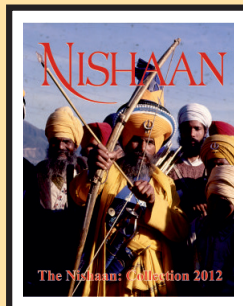
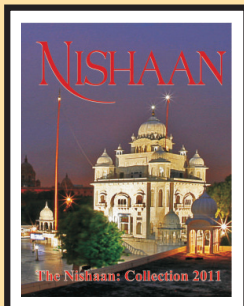
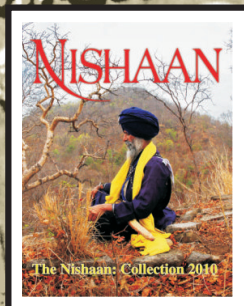
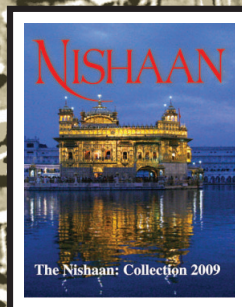
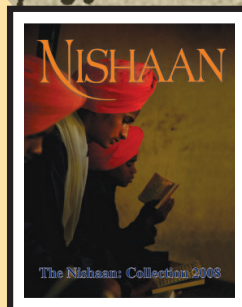
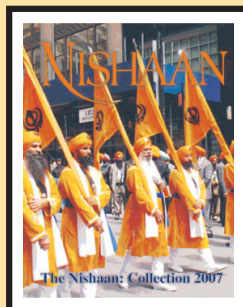
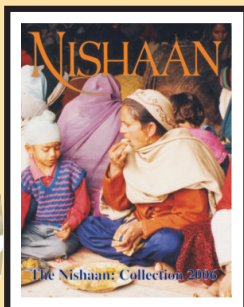
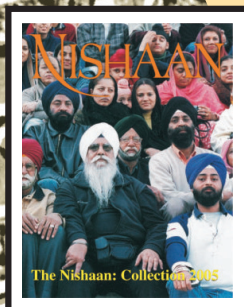
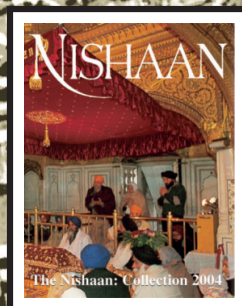
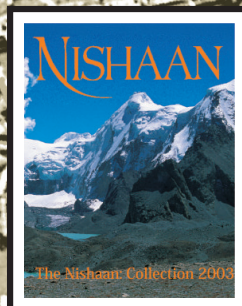
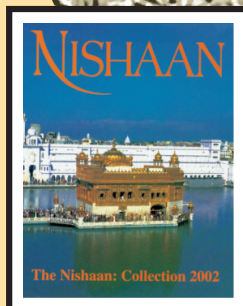
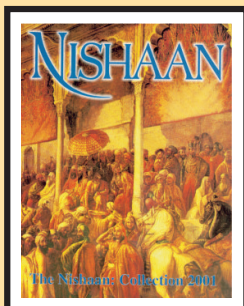
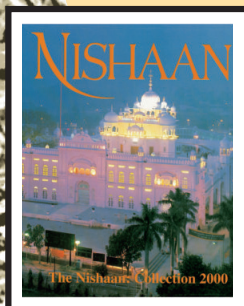


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